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E. DAVISSON POST

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PREFECT OF POLICE OF PARIS

By
MELVILLE DAVISSON POST

MONSIEUR JONQUELLE:
PREFECT OF POLICE OF PARIS

THE MOUNTAIN SCHOOL-
TEACHER

THE SLEUTH OF
ST. JAMES'S SQUARE

THE MYSTERY AT THE
BLUE VILLA

UNCLE ABNER,
MASTER OF MYSTERIES

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MELVILLE DAVISSON POST

AUTHOR OF "UNCLE ABNER," "THE SLEUTH OF ST. JAMES'S SQUARE,"
"THE MOUNTAIN SCHOOL-TEACHER," ETC.

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MONSIEUR JONQUELLE
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I.—*The Great Cipher*

It was a night of illusions. The whole world was unreal. The city could not be seen. There was a sort of fairy vista extending over the gardens across the bit of park into the haze, pierced by the narrow white shaft of the National Monument extending into the sky.

There was a heavy odor of jessamine and honeysuckle lying about the southern portico of the Executive Mansion. But there were no lights. The whole of the portico was in heavy shadow. A big, strong, masculine voice, cultivated and firm, was speaking.

"I am glad that business of your embassy brought you to America, Monsieur Jonquelle," it said, "because I wanted to ask you about that last expedition of Chauvannes'. I knew Chauvannes in South Africa. He was a first-class man. What was the mystery about his death? The current report at the time could not have been the truth. It was too fantastic."

One might have made out the figure of the Frenchman by looking closely in the dim light. He sat in a long chair, his legs extended, a cigarette, unlighted, moving in his fingers. His voice was low and clear when he spoke, like one engaged with a reflection.

"It was all the truth, Excellency," he said, "as we now know."

The big voice interrupted: "That fantastic story!"

The Frenchman's voice did not change.

"The truth about it," he said, "is even more fantastic than the current story of the time. Nobody believed it. Nobody could have believed it. When his journal finally came in, everybody thought Chauvannes had gone mad before the end. The things he wrote down simply could not have happened!"

He paused. "But it was every word the truth. . . . There are the emeralds in the Louvre."

The big man beyond Monsieur Jonquelle, obscured by the thick shadow, made an exclamation of astonishment.

"The emeralds," he said, "are of course proof of the fact that Chauvannes found some evidences of the thing he was after. But his journal could not have been the truth. The man who wrote the closing pages of that journal must have been mad."

The Frenchman replied with no change in his voice.

"Excellency," he said, "the man who wrote the closing pages of that journal was not only sane, but he was so clever that I have never ceased to admire him. He was in a desperate position, from which, he knew perfectly well, there was no escape, and he undertook to do a thing that not only required the soundest intelligence, but it also required a degree of cleverness that has not been equaled by anybody. I feel that I ought to stand and uncover whenever I think about Chauvannes."

There was a sound in the darkness as of one drawing one's body swiftly together in a chair. There was a sort of booming in the big voice.

"You amaze me!" it said. "Of course, I knew what Chauvannes was after. He used to talk about it when we were shooting on the Vaal. He had the clue, he thought, to a lost civilization of an immense age, in the great wilderness of Central Africa, a little north of the Congo. The old route of the ivory raiders had touched it. And there were the stories the slave traders had brought out, and so forth. I thought at the time that he was building on insufficient data, but one never knows what civilization may have flourished on any portion of the earth's surface. An immense wilderness laid down over it would

mean nothing. The race is much older than we imagine."

He continued to speak in his strong, firm voice:

"I was not surprised that Chauvannes found some evidence of the thing he was looking for. He was a first-class archeologist. He knew all about everything of the sort that had been uncovered. And he was a good, all-around explorer, none better. If there was any man in the world who could have gone from the Congo across the old trail of the ivory raiders, northeast to the Albert Nyanza, it was Chauvannes. I can believe that Chauvannes went in there, and that he found the evidences of the thing he was looking for; but the journal that the survivor of the expedition brought in could not be true. Chauvannes was insane when he wrote it—if the excerpts I saw of it were not colored. One could easily go mad at the end of an adventure like that. It was an appalling thing to undertake. That forest lies on the equator. It is very nearly three thousand miles across it. There is every conceivable peril in it. One would look for a man to come out on the Nyanza mad, if he ever did come out."

Monsieur Jonquelle replied in the same even voice.

"Our government, Excellency," he said, "was

precisely of your opinion, when the journal finally came in. They thought Chauvannes was mad at the end. But he was not mad! He was sane and clever—how sane and how clever you will realize when you get the whole thing clearly in your mind. It was a long time before we understood it, although how we could have been so stupid seems to me now a greater wonder than the fantastic incidents with which Chauvannes filled the closing pages of his journal.

"I think the first clue we got was the method Chauvannes had taken to be sure that the journal would get into Paris after his death. His direction, written on the back of it, was that the bearer who brought it in should be paid five thousand francs by the executors of his estate. You see he was offering a reward for the thing to get in.

"Only one of the three men that Chauvannes constantly speaks of in his journal ever appeared. One can imagine what happened to the other two—the same thing, doubtless, that happened to all the persons who started with Chauvannes northeast to the Nyanza after he had abandoned his excavations."

The big man beyond Monsieur Jonquelle in the dark seemed to have composed himself to listen. He was silent, and Monsieur Jonquelle went on:

"These men, who were the only persons alive with Chauvannes when he finally reached the Ituri

on the morning of the seventeenth of December, must have been three of the most desperate adventurers in the world. They were evidently broken men at the end of their tether, willing to stake everything on a last chance, or they would not have joined Chauvannes. They were not men he selected. He never would have selected men of this character. They seem to have followed him in and to have literally annexed themselves to his expedition when he left the Congo east of the Leopold. They must have been an exquisite devil's guard—those three; the little wolf-faced Apache, Leturc, the Finn sailor, and the American beach comber they called Captain Dix.

"The Apache was the one who came in with the journal. He must have been, after all, what you would call the 'best man' of the three. Nevertheless it was these three hell birds who came out alive with Chauvannes. And what he had to say about them is on every page of the journal. He must have changed his mind very shortly after they joined him, because the first impressions he wrote down, which were probably what our own would have been, were afterward scratched out. We might have believed that some one else had made these erasures but for the fact that the journal from this time on never fails to speak of these three men in the highest terms. Their tirelessness, their energy, their courage, their devo-

tion to Chauvannes is the one note that continues through this journal to the end.

"Of course, one could say that as these three men had to depend on Chauvannes to bring them out, the presence of a common peril would have united them in his support, and that while they were apparently exerting themselves for him, they were, in fact, laboring to get out of that wilderness alive.

"They were evidently densely ignorant persons of a low order. The Finn and the American beach comber had no education whatever; Leturc could read—he was a deserter, we think, from the Foreign Legion—and he had a sort of devil's shrewdness. But he was no match, when it came to wits, for Chauvannes. None of them were. They were ignorant and superstitious. But they were determined, desperate to the last degree, and afraid of nothing.

"One of the features of the journal that first impressed me was the fact that Chauvannes had no illusions about these men. He understood each of them perfectly. He pinned the success of his great plan to an accurate conception of the Apache, Leturc. He thought this desperate human creature was what you would call the 'best man.' He expected him to come out the best man, and he laid the plan he had in mind to fit that

eventuality. And he was right. I saw that when I got to thinking about the journal.

"And I saw something else. I saw that Chauvannes realized his own situation pretty early in the march of events. He knew what he was going into. And he knew where the thing would lead. He realized it a long way ahead. This fact, as I have said, was one of the conspicuous features of the journal. I suppose one, in an incipient madness, might realize all the accurate features of the situation that lay about Chauvannes, and before him, as he did; but I doubt it. I think only a man sound and sane could have seen it with the certainty that Chauvannes saw it, and at the distance beyond the event. Only the soundest intelligence, in the calm control of every faculty, could have realized that the thing before him was inevitable. A man in any other state of mind would have undertaken to delude himself. He would have resorted to futile devices, or to some tragic issue before the end, or to some vain hope. It took a mind like Chauvannes', profoundly sane, to see that the thing that awaited him was inevitable!

"I studied that journal as closely as a cipher dispatch. The evidences of Chauvannes' mental condition did not appear until the entries beginning about the seventeenth of December—the day on which they finally came out of the forest on the old elephant trail. Of course, strange things

had happened before that—the decimation of the force, for one thing. But Chauvannes never seemed to attribute this to any but a natural cause, a sort of united plan of the dwarf camps to destroy the members of the expedition.

"He found that whole, awful wilderness veined through with these camps, precisely as Stanley found it when he was following the Ituri in his effort to relieve Emin Pasha. And Chauvannes seems to have had precisely the same experiences as Stanley, in that the poisoned arrows, which the dwarf tribes used, were always fatal to the natives, but not to the white men of the expedition. At least, the three white men with Chauvannes, and the explorer himself, always escaped, while the persistent destruction of the other members of the expedition continued until only Chauvannes and the other white men came out alive.

"Chauvannes, like other men who have been into the Congo, tried to find out what the poison was that these dwarfs used, but he had no more success at it than Stanley. He thought the fact that white men did not die of this poison, as Stanley's expedition demonstrated, may have, perhaps, convinced these hostile tribes that a white man could not be so destroyed, and was the reason why they directed their attacks against the natives of the expedition and not against the four white men who conducted it. The explanation seems pos-

sible. It seemed intelligent to Chauvannes, for he makes it very clear in his journal that this is his belief. He gives it as the reason why all the members of the expedition finally perished except the four members of it who were white.

"The expedition was not large. It was as small as Chauvannes could get on with. He never intended it to be more than a scouting party, to lay out the thing he was looking for. The discovery of the emeralds was a sort of accident in removing the portion of an ancient wall that an uprooted tree had dislodged."

There was a moment's silence. Then Monsieur Jonquelle went on:

"Of course, the average person, accustomed to adventure tales, has a fantastic notion about these hostile natives. But there is in fact nothing fantastic about them. The whole of this immense forest, lying above the equator, is inhabited by these tribes, and their furtive attacks with poisoned weapons, usually at night, are well known to everybody. Stanley's whole expedition was constantly menaced by them. You will see his map dotted all over with their camps. They are no fairy creatures of romance. They are a constantly menacing, actual peril in the Congo.

"Chauvannes saw nothing strange or mysterious about what happened to the native members of his expedition. His journal is clear on that.

"I said a while ago that the incredible things set out in the journal did not begin to appear until about the seventeenth of December, when they had finally come out. It is true that some indicatory things are noted in the journal before that date. Chauvannes could not sleep. He returns again and again to this fact. Bromides did no good. He continues to complain about the failure of the bromides. He wonders if the drugs have lost their virtue, or if they could not have been pure. He notes that he tested this with one of the other men and observed the effect. The bromides were all right. This fact gave him a good deal of concern. He could not sleep. And the drugs upon which the medical profession depends in such a case, failed.

"We find this feature in considerable detail and beginning some time before December 17 while the expedition was still in the forest of the Congo, in its awful march to the northeast.

"It could have been nothing short of awful in every conception of the word. The whole of that vast wilderness is a kingdom of Satan. We never can get any adequate realization of it—a horror of gloom and rain, the heavens shut out nearly all the time by the tree tops, the whole earth underneath a bog, every form of creeper, of vermin, of reptile, the stench of a rotten world, and this invisible enemy that never relented and never tired

out. It was enough to break down the morale of anybody. No wonder Chauvannes couldn't sleep! But it never did break down his morale—that's precisely what I am going to make clear to you—not even when he saw, with an almost uncanny second sight, what was inevitably ahead of him.

"I don't know when it was that Chauvannes realized what was ahead of him, but as I have said, I think he saw it almost from the first day of the march north.

"I studied that journal word by word and sentence by sentence. I felt at the time that no one of us understood it, that the thing meant something which ought to appear if we were able to grasp a proper conception of it. I felt before it as I used to feel before those clever German dispatches, which appeared on their faces to be merely a narrative of a domestic incident, when they were in fact army orders containing a definite direction. I was right, as events proved, but the government authorities in Paris at the time considered my notion fantastic.

"Still, as I have said, the strange digressions in his journal did not begin to appear until about the seventeenth of December, when they came out on to the great grass-covered plateau outlined to the east by a low mountain range, beneath which lay Lake Albert Nyanza. As it happened, they had come out ten days ahead of the date which

they had determined upon for the arrival of the lake boat. It was to receive the expedition at the same point on the Nyanza that Stanley met Emin Pasha.

"Now, here was another indicatory point. They did not go ahead to the Nyanza as Stanley had done. They camped on a grassy slope—it looked like an English lawn, Chauvannes said—within the first day's march out of the forest. Here they remained.

"Chauvannes had all the modern implements that an explorer carries with him, and he laid down the exact location of this camp with the most painstaking accuracy. It was charted in the journal in half a dozen different forms and checked in every variety of way. He seemed to have spent a lot of time at this. He was determined that the exact spot of this camp should be definitely located for all time and beyond any possibility of error. And he did not fail. The exact location of that camp is as certain as any boundary monument on our Belgian frontier. It can be located to-day within the error of half a meter. He had plenty of time for this, because he remained in this camp with Leturc while the other men went on to the Nyanza.

"The route to the lake could now be laid out to the eye. It was directly below a marked rocky promontory of the sky line. But the men with

Chauvannes thought it better to be certain of the way out, and as they had to put in the time until the boat arrived, it seemed advisable to go over the route. The American beach comber, Dix, and the Finn set out for the Albert, Leturc remaining in the camp with Chauvannes.

"Chauvannes seemed in the journal to take a certain care to justify this course. He was now alarmed about his condition. The camp was in a spot little less than heavenly after the awful forest of the Congo. It was a rolling country of bright green pasture land, veined with an outline of trees, its hilltops studded with thickets beyond which lay to the east the range of mountains rimming the Nyanza. It was simply a paradise after the horror of the vast wilderness to the southwest of it. Birds were everywhere. It was a glorious country, full of antelope, eland, buffalo and the like. It was no trouble for a hunter to supply a camp.

"It was here alone with Leturc that Chauvannes finished the journal, which I finally deciphered, as one might say, at the *Service de la Sureté* in Paris.

"I have said that the only thing indicating Chauvannes' condition before the seventeenth of December, when they came out on the old elephant track into this heavenly country below the Albert, was the fact that he could not sleep and that the

bromides had failed him. But this was not precisely all. The journal began to indicate a state of mind in Chauvannes that he apparently hesitated a long time to record, the impression that they were approaching some sort of creature of which they had very little, if any, dependable information.

"That statement seems vague, but the impression upon which it is founded in the journal is in itself vague. It was, to put it plainly, a feeling that some strange creatures were ahead of him. Now, one could have understood this, if it had been the feeling that these creatures were *following* the expedition, for the hostile dwarfs had, in fact, followed it until they had destroyed, as I have said, every member of the expedition except the four white men. But it was not this peril that seemed to affect Chauvannes; this was a thing of which he was aware and which he could understand; but the vague fear of the creatures *on in front of him* was a new conception.

"Chauvannes said that he could not dismiss this impression and that it increased as he advanced, attaining to a definite certainty of apprehension at about the time they came out into the grass land west of the Albert.

"At first Chauvannes put this down as an illusion arising from the depression of insomnia. But

he began to speak of it later as a sort of definite premonition to be reckoned with.

"Of course, when the journal first came into our possession, we took this, and the incredible things that followed, to be merely the illusions of a man whose nervous system had broken down. This was a profound error. Every statement following in the journal was, as it proved, of the most definite importance. One got here at this point in the journal a pretty clear conception of the condition of Chauvannes at the time.

"The three with him, whose care, devotion and untiring solicitude are, as I have said, the persistent note of this latter part of Chauvannes' journal, were now very much concerned about him. They seemed to understand the danger, to himself, of one in such a mental state, for they secured and destroyed all the ammunition to the private weapons which Chauvannes carried; they even broke the blades of the knives. They appeared to realize that a homicidal seizure might develop from such a mental condition, and they seemed to fear that it might take the course of a suicidal mania. They were wholly without fear for themselves, as Chauvannes' journal repeats over and over again.

"It is here, now, at this point, that the whole journal of Chauvannes' begins to be taken up with the extraordinary things that he observed. The

impression of some strange creatures close on the camp, in the neighborhood, became an obsession. One can tell that from the speculations with which the pages of the journal are filled at this point, as though the man were endeavoring to lay down an argument in order to support an impression which he felt certain was sound, but which he was also certain would appear fantastic to all other persons. Were men justified in the belief that the exceedingly narrow limits of their crude senses could give them a knowledge of all the creatures that might inhabit the world? He continues to reflect upon the limitation of the senses; the eye was easily deceived; the ear was wholly undependable; the sense of scent in a human being was absurd beside that of the most inferior animal, and all feeling was confined to a sense of touch infinitely crude. Was it not then ridiculous to assume, depending on such limited agencies, that one could have any large conception of what even the limited area of the world close about him contained?

"There are a dozen pages of this speculation closely written in the journal, following the insomnia and what we at first took to be the hallucination which possessed Chauvannes at the time. They bring us up to the strange events which he began now to set down in detail.

"This was all mental. It was all what one

would call 'a state of the mind.' The physical evidences began now to appear.

"It was on the first night in the new camp after they had emerged from the forest that Chauvannes had a sensation, as he puts it, of something delicately feeling over his face. It seemed to be a very slight, moving touch, as of the tip of a feather, but it was clearly distinguishable. The man put up his hand and made a swift gesture in the darkness about him, but there was absolutely nothing that he could touch. He says that this thing happened more than once in the night, and each time, although he put out his hand instantly, it came in contact with no physical evidences of any creature about him.

"This was before Dix and the Finn had set out to go over the route to the Albert. Chauvannes says that he spoke to the men 'guardedly,' as he puts it, about this experience on the day that followed it, but they had observed nothing. There had certainly been no sound in the tent; nor was there any track or evidence of the fact that any creature had been in it.

"The thing occurred again the next night. On this occasion Chauvannes distinctly felt that swift, lingering touch pass over his face; and again, instantly, he clutched about him in the dark, beating the whole place with his arms in a desperate effort to come into some physical contact with the crea-

ture. But it was wholly to no purpose. He touched nothing. There was no sound anywhere, and the men sleeping about him in the tent were not disturbed. He says that on the following morning he mentioned this thing again, but the three men with him had no experience of it whatever.

"If these creatures, of which Chauvannes had the strange premonitory sense, had finally appeared, they seemed to be directing their attentions exclusively to him. At any rate, the men denied having been disturbed by anything. They had seen nothing, felt nothing. But they were disturbed about Chauvannes.

"And it was on this day, it seems, that they took the precaution about his weapons. They also decided that the Frenchman Leturc should remain with Chauvannes all the time to see that nothing happened to him. The journal makes it clear that this precaution was taken, with the idea that Chauvannes in his present mental condition might do some injury to himself, rather than in the notion that he was menaced by any mysterious creature.

"And they followed that plan. Dix and the Finn set out to go to Albert Nyanza, and Leturc remained with Chauvannes.

"It was on the third night, after the two men had departed and he was alone in the tent with

the sleeping Leturc, that Chauvannes saw this creature. He says it was about three o'clock in the morning. He had been awake through the entire night, his eyes usually closed. He does not know how he happened to open them, but he did open them. It was precisely seventeen minutes to three, by the watch which he wore on his wrist. He knew this because it was a night of full moon, the brilliant rays of which entered the tent through the half-opened flap. There was absolutely no sound to have attracted Chauvannes' attention, and no other physical evidence of the presence of the creature that he was at the time aware of. But at any rate, he opened his eyes practically at the moment when the creature entered the tent—a thing it did without disturbing the flap and without making any sound whatever.

"Chauvannes says that he saw it distinctly. It paused for a moment after it had entered, remaining for some seconds quite motionless. He says that in proportion to the other parts of the creature's body, the head was enormous. It was cubical in contour. The outline was perfectly clear, but what we would call features were hardly distinguishable. The thing seemed to lack features. That was one of the distinguishing horrors of it—a head big in proportion to its body, cubical in outline and lacking features! The chest and the abdomen were also big, estimating the creature

by its own proportions. The limbs were long, narrow and jointed. The whole creature was of a repulsive, reddish color, and without any of the usual covering of animals with which the human race is familiar. The body seemed to be of some hard red substance, Chauvannes said—frozen and polished flesh, after the skin had been removed, was the idea he got.

"The creature remained only a moment visible to him; then it disappeared. It seemed to Chauvannes that it disappeared merely by turning about. He was unable to see it again, although the doorway where it entered was clear in the moonlight, and there was only the grass floor of the tent."

Monsieur Jonquelle stopped here in his narrative, like one who would wish a hearer to grasp the whole conception of the story before he went on. But he did not seek a comment. The man beyond him waited for him to go on, and he presently continued:

"I shall not follow the detail of all the experiences noted down by Chauvannes, and which, finally, brought him to the conclusions at which he at length arrived. He was able, after this night, to observe the creature and a number of its companions, although the man Leturc, who was always with him, seems never to have observed it.

Chauvannes got a profound impression of the creatures. They constantly gave him the idea of intelligence separated from any human feeling. He got also the impression that they were blind—at least in the sense that we understand blindness. That they had some other sense which was equal, if not superior, to the sense we call sight, was, he thought, clearly evident.

"He was also able to discover, although he does not give all the details of that discovery in the journal, that these creatures lived underground, and that one of their underground cities was very close to the camp. He had, in fact, by some sinister hazard, put down his camp almost at the doorway of the underground habitat of these extraordinary beings—if one could call a creature of this character a being in our sense.

"I suppose it was these conceptions of the *Thing* that caused Chauvannes to note in his journal a parallel in our modern fiction—the story of the Englishman Wells, about an underground creature, a degenerate of the human race, living in the darkness of a subterranean world and supporting itself on the flesh of the surface remnant of that race grown lovely and effeminate!

"Chauvannes in his journal did not draw a parallel. But he noted the details of this story, which he had read, as of something that occurred to him after he had actually discovered the crea-

tures, of which he had come out of the forest of the Congo with that dominating premonition.

"Now, these are among the distinguishing incidents of Chauvannes' journal that led Your Excellency, and the Paris authorities, to believe that Chauvannes was mad. The culmination of events seemed to establish it.

"You know how the journal goes on, giving the minute details that Chauvannes observed during the week that he was alone with Leturc, while the American beach comber, Dix, and the Finn made their journey to the Nyanza. And you know how Chauvannes finally came to the conclusion that the seven great emeralds, which he carried sewed up in the lining of his waistcoat, were the things that set these creatures on him.

"The emeralds are in the Louvre. They are seven of the most extraordinary jewels in the world. They are larger and purer than any other known emerald. They are cut in a manner of which we have no knowledge, and the backs of them are covered with a hieroglyphic writing that antedates any language that we know, and which, so far, has baffled every effort to translate.

"At any rate, although the Frenchman Leturc was with Chauvannes all the time—was, in fact, guarding him all the time—and although he was never at any time more than a dozen meters from the door of the tent, and although no sound was

ever heard, no violence was ever offered to anything, no track was ever seen, no act was ever done of which Chauvannes had any knowledge, or the guard Leturc had any knowledge—in spite of all this, on the very day before the return of Dix and the Finn, the emeralds disappeared!

"Chauvannes wrote it down in detail in the journal.

"He was certain, accurate, without any trace of doubt; the emeralds—no longer in his possession—were in the underground habitat of these creatures! And the opening to this habitat was close beside the very place of the camp.

"It was hardly any wonder that the men with him considered him mad, especially when one reads the closing pages of the journal. He takes, in writing, an elaborate and tender farewell of the three men. He thanks them in detail for their courage, their unfailing kindness to him and their devotion to the expedition. No man could have written a higher testimonial of the fidelity of his companions. He points out that his death is impending and certain. He begs that the journal may be carried to France, and he urges the French government to send out an expedition to recover the emeralds, which, he says, are concealed in the first underground dwelling of the creatures, which he has described, as though he were aware of the fact that there were other dwellings of these crea-

tures about. The emeralds are in the one closest to the camp, and they can be recovered! He is insistent on this point, as he is insistent on the fact that his death is near and inevitable, and as he is insistent on the fidelity of the three men with him.

"And when on the following day, as Leturc reported, he seized the Finn's rifle and shot himself, the men were, of course, convinced that he was mad."

There came a sudden vigor into Monsieur Jonquelle's voice.

"But he was not mad! Don't you see, Excellency, that the whole narrative of the journal was an immense cipher? Don't you see what the man was doing?"

The voice beyond Monsieur Jonquelle, in the darkness of the portico, boomed in a sudden big expletive. There was the sound of a doubled fist crashed into the palm of a hand.

"Wonderful!" he cried. "It's clever beyond words. Good God! Think of the man in that deadly position working out a clever thing like that. He knew what was going to happen to him. He knew it as soon as he picked up those jewels under the overturned stones on the Congo. He knew he would never come out alive, and he worked out the cipher in this journal to show where the emeralds were concealed, so the French

authorities could recover them. And he worked out all the details to be sure that the journal would finally get into Paris. It's wonderful! It's amazing."

He beat his leg with his big hand, thumping it as one might thump grist in a bag.

"I never dreamed that that was what the man was after. I thought he was mad!"

"Surely," replied Monsieur Jonquelle. "It was the first impression of everybody. But he was not mad. He was merely making a great cipher with all the details of this journal—a cipher that would deceive the three men who had already killed off all the natives in his expedition, and who had determined to murder him after they were certain that they could reach the Albert Nyanza! A cipher that would so completely deceive them, by bearing on its face the proof of their innocence and of his own madness, that they would be careful to get it to the French authorities as a justification of themselves!

"He knew there was no chance that he would ever come out alive! But he wished to rob these assassins of the treasure which they coveted, and he wished the record of his expedition and these incomparable emeralds to reach France. He therefore prepared a journal in which was concealed, as in a code, all the actual facts connected with his expedition and his assassination, and at

the same time would disclose the place in which the emeralds were concealed. It would also bring the assassins to that justice which they deserved. He foresaw that Dix and the Finn would assume that Leturc had stolen the emeralds. He knew that the Apache Frenchman was shrewder than these two, that he would realize their suspicion and that he would forestall it by their murder—a thing we know immediately happened after the assassination of Chauvannes on the morning of their return. This was established by the fragmentary confession of the Apache Leturc, shortly before he was executed."

Monsieur Jonquelle stopped.

"I maintain, Excellency, that this whole journal is the finest example of code writing that was ever undertaken in the world."

He paused. And his voice took on a note of profound courtesy.

"You know, Excellency, what the creature was that Chauvannes described, and where the emeralds were hidden?"

Again the big voice boomed.

"Surely," it cried. "Our conception of a thing depends on the manner in which it is described and the mental state which has been prepared to receive that description. It was the ant! The red ant! And the emeralds were concealed in the ant-heap nearest to the point where the camp was located!"

II.—*Found in the Fog*

LONDON had been in fog for a week—that thick, yellow, sulphurous fog that seems to seep out of the earth, that turns the city into a cavern, packed with the smoke of an inferno and filled with weird sounds. It had lifted a little on Friday evening when Monsieur Jonquelle came out of the Empire Service Club.

"Diable!" he commented as he waited for his motor to draw up; "these Britons have lungs of brass."

He had come this day from Paris and dined with Sir James Macbain, the head of the English department of police. London had been startled by a mystery, a mystery that had emerged from this fog.

On Wednesday night a four-wheeler had taken a fare at Charing Cross upon the arrival of the train from Dover. The fog was thick and the driver did not notice that a second man entered his cab. The only one he remembered was a short, stout man of middle age who named a hotel in Gloucester Road. When the four-wheeler arrived before the door of the hotel two men were

found in it. The short, stout one was dead and the other unconscious. The dead man proved to be Lord Landeau and the other the Count de Choiseul. Both had been shot in precisely the same direction from right to left. But while the bullet that killed Lord Landeau had passed entirely through his body, that which entered the Count de Choiseul had been deflected by striking a rib and had caused only a flesh wound that bled profusely. A revolver with two chambers empty was lying on the floor of the cab. The driver explained that as he passed Hyde Park he heard two reports in quick succession, but he took them to be the explosive sounds of a motor vehicle close behind him. Upon regaining consciousness the Count de Choiseul had declined to make any statement whatever.

The motor crossed Piccadilly and entered Bond Street. Monsieur Jonquelle, traveling whither he could not see, thought of the tragedy and of what Sir James had said:

"The man's guilty, guilty as the devil, but we have failed to trace the weapon, and if he continues to keep his mouth closed we cannot convict him. When we have put our case in, some nimble little barrister will pop up, hint that the prisoner is silent to shield a woman, offer some cock-and-bull story to fit the facts, and out he goes free as any of us. Damn the law! That's what I say.

In your country a prisoner can be taken before a magistrate and interrogated, but here he can sit tight and the crown cannot even comment on the fact of his silence."

Monsieur Jonquelle smiled as he recalled this didactic explosion of the angry baronet; he was familiar with the English law. The taxi turned off sharp into a narrow street running toward Park Lane, and presently drew up before a door. It was one of those gloomy, respectable houses that seem to have dwelt forever in these gloomy, respectable squares between New Bond Street and the border of Hyde Park. There was a policeman on this street, but not precisely before the door. He strolled up when the motor stopped, but after a glance at the man who got out and a word to the driver he passed on.

A servant admitted Monsieur Jonquelle and conducted him to a room on the second floor. There, a man sat reading by a library table. The man was not an Englishman, nor was one able precisely to say of what race he was. One placed him indefinitely in the south of Europe. He had an impressive face, but in it there was something subtly wrong. One thought it was the slack lip, or the small, deep-seated eye, or the heavy jaw, but no one of these features seemed to account for the strength of the impression. He was about forty, strong and athletic, one of a dozen figures

to be seen on any morning on the golf course at Cannes or on the links above La Turbie. He seemed a sort of invalid in some sense, for there was a pillow within the arm of the chair on the left side. He looked up sharply when Monsieur Jonquelle entered. The Frenchman did not speak until the door was closed behind him; then he bowed with a formal courtesy.

"My dear Count," he said, "permit me to congratulate you."

"I thank you, Monsieur," replied the man, "the wound proves fortunately slight, although the loss of blood was considerable."

"Pardon," continued the Frenchman with a faint, whimsical smile, "I do not felicitate Monsieur le Comte upon his health, but upon his courage."

"Courage!" echoed the man. "What courage have I shown in this affair?"

"Monsieur le Comte continues to mistake the object of my remark," said the Prefect of Police as he advanced into the room, put his hat and stick on a console and sat down, drawing off his gloves.

"It was not in the affair in which the Count de Choiseul received his wound that he has shown this daring that moves me to a compliment, but after that, when he came to this house."

The man's face darkened.

"And why should I not come here?" he re-

turned. "It is now the property of Lady Landeau. She wired from the Continent directing that I should be removed to this house and properly attended, when she heard of my injury. It was a delicate courtesy, seeing that Lady Landeau is herself prostrated at Bad Nauheim."

"Magnifique!" exclaimed Monsieur Jonquelle. "Bad Nauheim! It is where one goes for the heart. And such a sensitive, such a delicate and impressionable heart is this heart of my lady."

He made a slight gesture.

"Who should know this better than the Count de Choiseul? Ah, Monsieur, do not traverse the soft impeachment. It is the gossip of fashionable Europe. One hears it on every hand, at Biarritz, at Trouville, at Ostend—of course, Monsieur, in the whisper only and under the rose, but one hears it for all that, this infatuation of Lady Landeau for the Count de Choiseul. . . . Bad Nauheim, truly! *Eh, bien!* Many waters will not quench it, neither those of Haute-Savoie nor of any German spring."

"Monsieur," said the man coldly, "you go very far."

"But a less distance than the truth," replied the Frenchman. His manner was careless, debonair.

"Ah, my dear Count, you would elude me in the reserves of a becoming modesty, in the humilities of a noble nature. But I pursue you with

felicitations upon your conquest. Perhaps, though, Monsieur does not look upon this affair with so high a value. The Count de Choiseul is a great hunter. The conquest of a romantic woman, without any knowledge of the world and married to a man of twice her age, may not appear to Monsieur to be a triumph of the first order."

The wounded man was pale with anger. But Monsieur Jonquelle went on with a light unconcern.

"The fact that Lord Landeau looked upon the Count de Choiseul as a gentleman, and permitted him the liberties of his friendship and the confidences of a man of honor doubtless, too, robbed the affair of a certain sporting element which Monsieur le Comte would have in his adventures."

"Is there then no end to the insults that one must receive?" cried the wounded man, white to the lips. "Is it not enough to lay one under espionage like a common felon, to set a creature of the police about one in every servant's coat; but also the Prefect of Paris must be brought over to lecture one on morals!"

"Ah," replied the Frenchman with an injured air, "the Count de Choiseul does not regard me as his friend! Is gratitude then a mere fancy of the poets? And it is I who have three times warned him from the pit—Monsieur will remember those three times. In Nice when the Count

was about to dispose of some antiques from the collection of—let us say—an adopted uncle. In Paris when the Count was arranging to insure beyond doubt the success of a favorite horse at Auteuil. True the Count had before him a precedent for this in holy legend. Did not Saint Hilarius, according to Saint Jerome, draw upon the instrumentalities of Heaven in order to beat the horses of the Duumvir of Gaza? But times have changed. The saints are not popular in France, and the agencies that Monsieur was about to use for his adventure were, I take it, unknown to the Father of the church."

He paused and lifted his finger.

"And a third time in a villa in Baden, when the Count de Choiseul was banking a gentleman's game at roulette. True again, the Count could have urged a very pretty defense upon the point that the German law contemplated games of *chance* only, and that this roulette was a game from which Monsieur le Comte had very deftly removed every element of chance. But Monsieur instead of depending on that nice distinction—wisely, I shall always believe—preferred to act upon my friendly suggestion.

"Moreover"—and the Prefect of Police made a gracious gesture—"do I not always, in addressing Monsieur le Comte, accord to him the honors and distinctions of his title, a courtesy that the

editors of the *Almanach de Gotha* have denied him?"

The face of the Count de Choiseul became sullen and ugly. The glaze of culture seemed to slip off.

"What are you after, Monsieur?" he said through stiff jaws.

"Ma foi!" replied the Prefect; "does Monsieur le Comte ask me after this reminiscence? For what reason should I come here from Paris but out of my abiding interest in Monsieur's career? After my congratulations upon the approach of the ambitions of a life I would venture upon a fourth suggestion to the Count de Choiseul."

He leaned forward and addressed the wounded man as though he were some envied darling of the gods.

"If this affair should, as the Americans say it, blow over, then the Count de Choiseul has won a way into the very lap of fortune. He will be able to wed a lady of noble birth and to enjoy all that this lady takes by will from Lord Landeau—this city house which Monsieur has so early occupied with so fine a courage; a deer forest in Argyleshire; a yacht in the Mersey; a villa at Cannes, an apartment upon the Champs-Elysées, and the greatest landed estate in the English county of Dorset."

Monsieur Jonquelle paused and elevated his eyebrows.

"I do not promise that the conservative Briton will permit the Count de Choiseul to occupy, with these benefits, the vacant seat of Lord Landeau in their House of Lords, but Monsieur should not set that loss at too high a value. We are told by the greatest English journalist now living that this noble body is composed of garrulous old gentlemen always obviously quite wrong."

The Frenchman went on, returning to his serious note.

"These are substantial benefits. If the Count de Choiseul can win to them he has substituted the reality for every fiction that he has so long pretended. *J'en suis bien aise!* But in order to win them a certain thing remains to be accomplished. A very great deal has been done. By what agencies? *Diable,* such queries run into the riddle of the universe! Nevertheless a final thing remains. And unless this thing is accomplished, Monsieur le Comte cannot enter his kingdom."

The Prefect spoke like one dealing firmly with the realities of life.

"*Tiens!* What would you have? Shall the Count de Choiseul hesitate then in the moment of victory? If chance has helped him mount up to the last step, shall he not take that step himself?

Or if design has carried him thus far, shall he not courageously go on?"

"Monsieur," said the Count de Choiseul, "we shall get on better if you permit me to understand you."

He sat back in his chair, the pillow under his arm, his eyes narrowed and his big jaw protruding like a plowshare.

"The Count de Choiseul shall precisely understand me," replied the Prefect. "The suggestion that I come all the way from Paris to make to him is this—Monsieur must give some explanation of this tragic affair.

"Attend, Monsieur, if you please, and I will show you how pressing this necessity is. As this matter now stands it is a mystery—that is to say, a riddle, a problem. Now in France and among all Latin peoples a mystery, a riddle, a problem is forgotten like any other event if the answer is not found within the proverbial seven days of public notice. But to all Saxon races, to the Germans and to the English, a mystery is an eternal challenge. If a thing have an explanation it is immediately forgotten, but if it cannot be explained it will abide forever. Moreover the Saxon mind will never cease to consider it and will never give it up."

He made a gesture with his hand, the fingers extended.

"Look, Monsieur, how the Germans and these English labor eternally to solve mysteries that every Latin knows are beyond the capacities of the human mind—the origin of life, the domicile of consciousness and the meaning of the universe. Do the Germans or the English ever abandon them? Read Haeckel, Monsieur, and Spencer, Monsieur. The English purchase a hundred thousand copies of the ponderous explanation of the professor at Jena, and sit down with that to solve the great riddle for themselves. And with every new year comes a new German or a new Englishman, to show that the answers of his predecessors are wrong and that he alone has the correct ones. Nevertheless though every explanation is shown to be false the mystery is never abandoned. Nor is any mystery ever abandoned by these English people."

The face of the wounded man was inscrutable and the Prefect went on:

"Every man in these islands is fundamentally a solver of mysteries. Observe the puzzles on sale, and the devices of journals to increase their circulation by exhibiting a jar full of beans to be guessed at, or by hiding a hundred guineas on the Epsom Downs. And so, on account of this racial characteristic, the London police at once give some explanation of every mysterious crime. If they did not every man in this kingdom would

light his pipe and sit down to solve it for them, and he would never cease to work on it until an explanation was given to him. Literally, Monsieur, I do not exaggerate—for the peace of mind of the empire the police of these islands must find a solution for every mystery."

The Count de Choiseul, his attitude still that of a guarded defense, was nevertheless listening with attention. The Prefect went on.

"For this reason," he continued, "the London police, when profoundly puzzled, are often very glad to compromise with a mystery—that is to say, to accept any reasonable explanation of it.

"Now, Monsieur le Comte," and he spoke lower, "this affair is a mystery that the police cannot solve, and therefore all England will presently undertake to solve it." He spoke still lower. "I come then to suggest that if the Count de Choiseul will offer a reasonable explanation of this affair the police will accept it. All the London police want is an explanation not clearly inconsistent with the few evidential facts. And if Monsieur can offer such an explanation I undertake to promise that the police shall accept it."

The Prefect put up his hand as though to prevent an interruption.

"Pardon, Monsieur, a further word. The Count de Choiseul must not fail to get my meaning. The one thing which the London police re-

quire is some explanation of this mystery that does not leave them ridiculous. The true explanation? I do not care. The probable explanation? I do not care. But a rational explanation? Yes, it must be that."

Again he prevented an interruption with a gesture.

"Think about it very carefully, Monsieur, if you please. I have just now with a sort of indirection laid before the Count de Choiseul the conclusions possible to be deduced from certain events in his life. He may have believed my words vitriolic. But, Monsieur, I have been gentle compared to the brutal directness with which this English nation will comment upon these events when it sets itself about the solving of this mystery. And if the Count de Choiseul has in fact any plans for the future they will become impossible.

"Believe me, Monsieur, my flippant and suggestive manner in the earlier moments of this interview were with the design of showing how the Count de Choiseul's life and conduct in this affair could be construed—if they were known. And let us not deceive ourselves—they cannot be concealed if this affair goes on.

"No, Monsieur, hear me a little further before you undertake to reply. There is in every mystery a psychological moment when an adequate explanation will wipe it out of public notice. But the

moment cannot be prolonged. It even now strikes in this affair. Observe, Monsieur. On Wednesday evening the wounded de Choiseul was removed at first to a hospital and then to this house. The police appeased the public by giving out that the Count would doubtless explain the tragedy just as soon as he was able to make a statement.

"Now if Monsieur issues such a statement the police will accept it, the public will be satisfied and the mystery will be cleared up. If he does not——"

Monsieur Jonquelle shrugged his shoulders and spread out his hands with a suggestive gesture. Then he drew a little closer to the wounded man and continued in a voice so low that it was almost a whisper:

"Moreover so anxious are the London police to be rid of this mystery that they will accept the Count de Choiseul's explanation and abandon the one they believe to be true, and that is—pardon, Monsieur, if I appear *gauche*—that Lord Landeau was deliberately assassinated by the Count de Choiseul. But they believe that an unforeseen event interfered with the Count de Choiseul's plan and imposed upon him this ordeal of silence—namely, that as the Count de Choiseul was about to send a second bullet into his victim, Lord Landeau, either by striking the pistol with his arm in the convulsion of death or by making a momen-

tary attempt before death to grasp it, turned the second shot into the Count's own body precisely in the direction that the ball in fact took, by which the Count de Choiseul received a wound that rendered him unconscious."

He paused and looked the wounded man earnestly in the face.

"Surely, the Count de Choiseul can offer some explanation to take the place of this one?"

The man had been listening, his jaws compressed, his eyes narrowed. He now passed his fingers over the lower part of his face with a sort of irresolution.

"Monsieur," he said, "who is to decide whether this explanation which you seek is convincing and fits what you call 'the evidential facts'?"

"Why, Monsieur le Comte," replied the Prefect, "we shall decide that ourselves, you and I, here between us."

The wounded man sat back in his chair. He put out his hand on the table beside him, and the extended fingers moved on the board as to a sort of tune.

"Well," he said, "what is wrong with the theory that the two men in the cab were fired upon by a third?"

"Alas, Monsieur," replied the Prefect, "such an explanation is merely to complicate the mystery. It is but to add to the mystery we have, a

mysterious assassin, a mysterious motive, a mysterious disappearance, and a further mysterious reason why some unknown person wished to murder both Lord Landeau and the Count de Choiseul. Such an explanation would not help the authorities. It would only set the whole English public hot-foot to work on the thing. Besides, Monsieur, there is the fact of the pistol found on the cab floor. How came it there? No murderer would deliberately leave behind him a weapon by which he might possibly be traced. And, too, Monsieur, in the event that this pistol should prove the property of Lord Landeau or of the Count de Choiseul, what then?"

The wounded man reflected. "Is it not possible," he said, "that Lord Landeau fired these shots?"

"Let us look at that theory a moment," replied Monsieur Jonquelle. "Jealousy would be a sufficient motive. But what of these evidential facts? The Count de Choiseul sat on the right, Lord Landeau on the left; the Count is broad-shouldered, the Englishman stout and short-armed. The direction of the ball that killed Lord Landeau makes it clear that the two men were sitting side by side when the shot was fired. Now to inflict this wound Lord Landeau must have reached entirely round the Count de Choiseul with his right arm, a thing impossible.

"Think, Monsieur!" And the Prefect looked at the Count de Choiseul with the greatest concern. "A final explanation must remain, exclusive of these, and exclusive of a design on the part of the Count de Choiseul deliberately to assassinate Lord Landeau. *Mon Dieu!* Monsieur is a man of resources! It cannot fail to occur to him!"

The anxiety in the voice of the Prefect of Police could not be doubted. The Count de Choiseul suddenly threw up his head.

"Well!" he cried, "suppose this to be the true explanation then: A man of honor is in love with a married woman. In a cab in the night in the fog, like a gentleman he tells the husband of this woman and implores him to give her up. The husband refuses, and in despair the man undertakes to send a bullet into his own heart. The bullet is deflected by a rib, the man's arm is caught by his companion, and the second shot intended for himself kills the husband of the woman. What then? Does such an explanation fit your evidential facts?"

"Ah!" cried Monsieur Jonquelle, springing to his feet. *"Très bien!"* He remained a moment, his eyes bright and his face tense with reflection.

"It does fit them—it fits them like a key in a lock. Men have killed themselves for love since the world began. The motive is convincing, and the explanation tallies with every physical fact:

the position of the two persons, the direction of the wounds—even the very pistol on the cab floor. Nor does this explanation bar the Count de Choiseul from the regard of Madame. It is one thing to kill a woman's husband in cold blood, and quite another to kill him by inadvertence in an attempt to take one's own life for love of the woman. The latter becomes a sort of terrible compliment presently to be forgiven for its motive. My congratulations, Monsieur le Comte!"

He touched a bell. When the servant appeared the Prefect inquired if Sir James Macbain had arrived at the house. And being told that the baronet was below, directed that he be shown up immediately.

When the head of the department of London police entered Monsieur Jonquelle rapidly explained the situation. The baronet started and snapped his big iron fingers, then he listened with the closest attention. He did not speak until the Prefect was quite done with his recital. Then he turned to the Count de Choiseul. He was a huge man with an abrupt, decided manner.

"I do not believe this story," he said; "I think it is wholly false. Nevertheless I will accept it as the true explanation of Lord Landeau's death if the Count de Choiseul will commit it to writing over his signature. I may add that for the examining magistrate also to accept it the Count must

include that he makes this statement at his own volition."

Writing materials were brought and the wounded man wrote out his explanation of the tragedy. His face had changed. It was like the face of one who from subterranean perils has gained the upper air. When his statement was signed and witnessed the baronet put the folded paper into his pocket and the Prefect took up his hat and stick.

"Adieu, Monsieur le Comte," he said. "I shall perhaps not see you again."

"I will look you up in Paris!" replied the Count de Choiseul with a pleasant smile.

Monsieur Jonquelle paused a moment with his hand on the door.

"I fear not," he said. "It is the law of England, Monsieur may be interested to know, that if in an attempt to take his own life one by accident kills another, he is guilty of murder."

III.—*The Alien Corn*

I

I PARTED from Monsieur Jonquelle at Marseilles. I might have gone on with him to Algeria, but I was only an aide-de-camp attached to the staff of the commanding general in this affair. It was the Paris branch of our house that had the thing in hand. But I was idling in that city of pleasant sin and they sent me with him. It was an honorable discharge I got at Marseilles, not a desertion.

"Run up to Nice," the Prefect had said, "and amuse yourself, Monsieur. There is sun in Nice and the whole world to play with. *Diable!* If only one could be always young! . . . What is it that Chateaubriand says? 'If man, physically made perfect, could unceasingly respond to a sentiment everlastingly renewed, he might very well live the life of the gods!' "

And he made a delicate gesture with his extended fingers.

"If there be a trim ankle in the whole of France

you will find it now upon the Promenade des Anglais."

The head of the Department of Police in Paris is a gentleman. If you doubt it go into the Théâtre Vaudeville and see *La Prise de Berg-op-Zoom.*

"The head of the Department of Police in London is a baronet; you will remember that from the recent attempt of an assassin to shoot him down in the street before his house.

"You will therefore set aside, if you please, the type of persons observed to march at the head of parades in your strangely governed cities, and get, instead of that, a picture of a suave, gray man, who might be a minister of war in a book of memoirs."

He gave me a further word at parting.

"You must live on the hills back of Nice," he said; "the low quarters of the town are not healthy. Find a good hotel on the Boulevard des Cimiez."

"And how shall I find it?" I said.

He laughed.

"Why, Monsieur, there is nothing easier in this world. The tram ascends from the Avenue de la Gare to Cimiez. Enter it *premier* if you like; but look through into the second-class compartment. You will see some dozen ladies of noble

birth there." He paused a moment. "Observe where those ladies descend and follow them."

He laughed again; then he added:

"Try the Imperial Palais; old Monsieur Boularde, from the Champs-Elysées, is proprietor. You will find *chauffage central* and a café to be decorated. Boularde's method when he employs a chef is that of a master, Monsieur. He goes in and orders a dinner from the card; when he has tasted it he summons its creator. 'Monsieur,' he will say then, 'you are a good chef—you are an excellent chef; but you are not the best to be had in France. I cannot employ you.' "

Then his shrewd face became serious.

"Remember, Monsieur, they are all children over there in Nice and this is the season of carnival. You will be bombarded with confetti, and driven by your coattails for a petit cheval, and hung with garlands. . . . Laugh, Monsieur! Never cease to laugh! Spend your money! Waste your time and forget this unpleasant business that we are on. I shall attend to that. There is a trap laid that they will eventually fall into—if not to-day, then to-morrow." His face changed swiftly, like a mirror in moving lights. "But do you give it no further thought until I come upon you on some sunny morning. It will be all too soon—believe me—if you have got well into that enchanting frolic."

He reached up and laid his hand upon my shoulder.

"But you will not be a fool, my friend." And he looked at me with his keen gray eyes. "Eat the honey of your golden youth; but mind the bees, Monsieur! Kiss the *petite masque* that whispers ''Ello, dearie!' into your Saxon ear; but do not let your heart out of the bag. And do not believe all the words that we speak in France. *Mon Dieu!* Have we not a way of saying *fille de joie* when we mean the pit?"

And he turned back at the gangplank of his boat for a final word:

"Keep out of the chill at sunset, *mon cher ami,* and the game at Monte Carlo."

If there is any sun in one's blood it will come out in France: the people are so genial. I traveled up to Nice on the express. An old Frenchman got into my compartment. He was big and stooped, and he had a wilderness of beard; but he was a suave and pleasant person. He read *La Patrie* through his big, dim spectacles, with his nose against the page; but when we were on the way, and he had got the news of Paris, he put it down, addressed me with a little courteous apology for the monotony and asperities of travel—and we fell into a pleasant talk.

He had a distressing weakness of the chest that ejected him out of Paris in the winter months, and

he was on his way to Mentone. He had the history of the Côte-d'Azur upon his fingertips, and he passed from the first days of the world into the last with a charming ease of manner. He pointed out the Roman monuments and the English golf course at Cannes. He spoke of Cæsar and Lord Brougham in the same sentence, and the island where Paganini lay for so long unburied, listening to the great orchestra of the Mediterranean and the winds.

He envied me the holiday in Nice. To be an American, young, rich and traveling for his pleasure, was to have God's blessings bound together in a bundle. Had I a hostelry in Nice arranged for? The city would be crowded, now that the rains were ended. I told him I would go to the Imperial Palais on the Boulevard des Cimiez. Ah, I was very rich, then! And he coughed to lay clear the great contrast in our fortunes. He seemed depressed after that; and when I got out at Nice I left him huddled over in a corner of the compartment, his big shoulders shaking and his fingers pressed to his mouth, as though he feared a hemorrhage. The thing saddened me—thus to pass by age and its inevitable weaknesses as one entered into the gate of pleasure!

There had come on a little gust of rain and I went up through the city in a thin batter of white mud. I found the hostelry to be very nearly equal

to its name. It is in a great semicircle above rising terraces set with orange trees—formal, as though painted upon the scenery of a theater. The interior is upon a plan strikingly unique. The building is in segments opening into the arc of a corridor; each of these segments has its separate stairway and its tiny elevator that ascends in the open hollow of the stair—a little gilded and paneled cage, operated by electric buttons.

And here one has a curious experience of service. Every creature, from Monsieur Boularde descending, will run to fling open the doors to this dainty mite of a box, bow one in, close the doors, and send one on the way skyward. But one has to pilot this craft for himself and, when he has alighted, close the doors and return it. It is all cleverly worked upon a little nest of buttons. Each of the segments in the structure is a section of exquisite apartments.

The lower and larger ones were taken for the season; but I was shown two farther up, looking out over Nice, that were vacant—each with a balcony and some extravagances in mirrors that added a hundred francs. I chose the top one; and in the morning when I came out from my bath and flung open the long window, and the balmy air and the sun entered, I decided that the balcony was worth the hundred francs. One needed just that above this fairy city, with its clean, red roofs,

its mountains of dull-green olive trees, its inimitable sky, and the motionless sea with its vast changing patches of color. There was no breath of wind; there was no wisp of cloud. I stood before it as before some illusion of the senses. How could Nature stage a thing like that? Yes, this balcony was clearly worth the money. At that minute the window below opened and some one stepped out. I looked down.

A woman was standing there on the balcony. She wore a loose gown of delicate blue, and her hair hung to her waist in two wrist-thick plaits. I stared in a sort of wonder. The setting and my mood were agreeable to the entrance of some fairy creature. And here she was, as the painters were accustomed to present her in their pictures.

The very words of the old story-tellers were accurately descriptive—hair as yellow as gold and as heavy as gold; and she was little and dainty, like the fairy women. I knew that her eyes were blue like the cornflower before she looked up. I must have made some sound, but she did not see me; and in a moment she went back through the window.

I swallowed my breakfast—this is a practical world—and I made some inquiries of the servant who brought it up. The apartment was taken on this very morning. Madame Nekludoff and maid. A Russian then? *"Oui, Monsieur."* A

princess then, perhaps? He shrugged his shoulders and threw out his hands above my pot of coffee. How could one tell? If they said they were it was a sign against it! The coins were true and false! The latest princess of the blood was a dancer from Montmartre, with her hand in a banker's pocket. And a *nègre* from New York had traveled as a rajah! The truth was by contraries, he thought—like dreams. Since this new guest gave no title, she doubtless had one.

The old *femme de chambre* on the floor below was an expert in such matters, however. Monsieur understood? There were skilled dealers in jewels who, by the eye, could tell a spurious brilliant. It was long experience, maybe, or a sort of instinct—one could not say. Well, the ancient Eda was such a judge of the human jewel. Should he enlist her service for Monsieur? I declined, and we closed the incident with a coin of the republic.

I went down and smoked innumerable cigarettes upon the great terrace among the formal orange trees. Strolling singers came and sang, and children danced; but somehow my interest in events was not with them. I had an eye upon that balcony, but no god moved. I went in to luncheon, and after that to the vantage of my window. It was in vain.

Then, when I had given up and abandoned my-

self to fortune, as Cæsar used to do, the thing happened.

I was going down in that absurd gilt box of a lift, when, as I approached the floor below, a little voice called out: *"Ascenseur!"* I had trouble to select the proper button, but finally I got it, and after some endeavors brought the craft to dock, and got the doors open. I saw Madame Nekludoff for an instant before she recognized that I was not a servant.

She was not the mere child that she looked in her fairy costume, but she was young—one or two and twenty, I should say. Her face in repose was saddened, as though she had tasted life and found it bitter. She was all in black, but there were no extravagances of mourning in her dress. She had chosen that color, I thought, that she might be the less conspicuous; but it was a failure to that end. The somber background served only the more to bring out the lights in her hair and the fair, transparent skin.

She was in a panic of confusion when she saw that I was not a servant.

"Oh, pardon, Monsieur!" she said. "I thought it would be *le garçon.* I am sorry! Pardon!" And she turned to go back to her apartment.

I made the best continental bow I could.

"Madame will do me a very great honor," I said, "if she will permit me to take her down. I

cannot pretend to a very considerable skill as an aërial pilot, but I think I can manage." I went on, for I feared she would go away forever if I ceased to talk—and the fear was very truly founded: "There ought, of course, to be a genie with this magic box; but he is sleeping or on a journey, and in his absence may I not offer a neighbor's service?"

She declined, however, expressed her regret at having caused me this annoyance, and in some confusion returned to her apartment.

I went down in no very genial mood. Here was the golden door in the wall gone shut before I could get my foot in. I held myself now somewhat lighter in esteem. I must have bungled pretty badly. It would be my doddering, idiotic pleasantries! Whence is it that a man, ordinarily sane, has a seizure of these driveling witticisms upon the moment that the gods give him?

This woman was accustomed to a formal courtesy. And here was a big, simpering barbarian who would be genial, and would seize upon the advantage of an error to strike up a galloping acquaintance. It was no vain institution—these continental manners; and we have them not. And therefore we must be misunderstood, our best motives wrongly interpreted, and ourselves catalogued in a class of *bourgeois*.

I went down to the Promenade des Anglais and

sat there on a bench in the sun. The world went by on that great stone way paving the arc of the sea. Workmen in blue blouses were setting up standards along the streets, and cunning electrical devices, and building seats in tiers. Crowds of people moved like swarms of butterflies. An old, huge Italian came upon me with a basket of wire masks. He knew a little English and was proud to display it with his wares.

The meester would go into the carnival this night, perhaps, with friends, in a carriage? They would have a bag of—I never could get the word —but I found out later that he meant the little clay balls that are thrown like handfuls of shot, in place of confetti, and must be kept off with a mask. And he displayed his wares—pink; blue; every color. The meester would need several perhaps? He would not be alone in his carriage!

I told him with some asperity of language that I had no carriage for this night—nor any friend; and that he would oblige me by going to the devil! But he was a rogue of perennial good humor. He leered at me across his basket. The meester would not go to bed this night because his spirits were cast down! This was the gala night. Nice would be wonderland this night! The gnomes, the elfin people, and all the grotesque creatures of the fairy world would possess the city! Men traveled from the ends of the earth for this night

only. And would the meester go to sleep, then, like a lout before the fire? Let him secure a mask for two francs and forget the tables if chance were the offender—or his mistress if she had cut him. There would be fortune another day, and Nice on this night would be full of women; in fact, there was no supply of anything in France so plentiful.

I got up from the bench and left him; but he followed me to say that he would keep his eye upon me and that I should purchase from him, not one mask, but two, or he was no honest tradesman from Bordighera and the son of a poet!

I went into a shop on the Rue de Félix Fauvre and got an English book. But I could not have read the Memoirs of the Abbess of Odo. I presently gave it into the hand of a young woman who sold me a *ravissant* cigar, manufactured in Algeria—quite true, as I discovered, and from the frayed cables in the harbor there! I went then to the Crédit Lyonnais and tried to deposit a draft; but to all my tenders I received the same polite assurance in my native tongue: "Et es not sufficient." I did not care, for I had money in my pocket; but the universe was out of joint. I took a *fiacre* to my hotel and sat once more on the terrace among the orange trees.

Evening was descending, the air was motionless, and the colors of the world were stolen out of Paradise. And yet, with it all, I sat before it

some distance down in the Inferno because a certain balcony was empty. The thing was incomparably absurd—to be thus dispossessed by a fancy! But then it is the fancies in this life that have power to dispossess us! If one goes upon an adventure in enchanted countries, shall he be unmindful of the damsel he meets there? It is not so written in the tales of Bagdad!

I was interrupted by a great buzzing. A gigantic bird circled over Nice; and far away, in the direction of Cannes, a speck was approaching; and behind it another, and still another, traveled in the dead air above the motionless sea like a projectile, until it, too, became a monster bird with black wings and a yellow body. I might have looked for these creatures in this enchanted country. Should one meet here every other wonder of Arabia and not find the roc! The whole aërial fleet of France, encamped in the flat meadows toward Cannes, was in maneuver.

In a moment the windows were full of people. I looked for Madame Nekludoff; but, instead, there came out on the balcony a squat, middle-aged woman with the aspect of a peasant. She seemed to speak to some one inside, for I could see her lips move; and she looked down once at me; then she opened the windows as wide as she could get them, in order, I thought, that some one inside could see without coming out. It occurred

to me then that my surveillance was observed by madame and that it annoyed her.

I got up and went inside, took a cold plunge, got my dinner and determined to go out and see all the carnival, like any sensible person. Monsieur Boularde said it would be time enough when I heard the cannon; but he was mistaken in that sign. There was a red glow over the city when I went out. The procession was beginning to enter the Avenue de la Gare.

The streets looking into it were packed with people. I could see above their heads. Troupes of gnomes, hunchbacked, fearfully deformed, with large, nodding heads, passed. Gigantic cabbages and carrots followed; devils mounted on horseback. Eight horses passed, dragging a red papier-mâché lion twenty feet high and long in proportion; and on the head of the creature, in a pose of sublime heroism, stood Tartarin of Tarascon. Behind came the washerwomen of the Var, with faces greater than a winebarrel, that smirked with a sort of Titanic glee, which the men under the disguise helped out by doing an absurd little step, holding their petticoats in the tips of their fingers like dancers.

I wished to get a little closer to the Avenue de la Gare, but I could not for the crowd of people and carriages immovable in the narrow street. I saw then the folly of going this night in a carriage.

It became at once imbedded in the crowd, and one had to give it up and go on foot to see. I determined to get into the Place Masséna, so I could watch the procession enter it from the Avenue de la Gare.

As I forced my way out of the crowd I saw the Italian who sold masks, with his basket on his arm and his big body on tiptoe, stretching up over the crowd. He seemed to divine my intention and followed me. The Place Masséna was also crowded, and the stand of seats in the center was black with people. I understood then how only a Latin can make a fantasy in lights.

Vast, gorgeous, fluttering butterflies caught in golden webs hung across the Avenue de la Gare, suspended above it at every cross-street, with the effect, when one looked along it, of being laced over with the innumerable webs of some monster spider, in which were entangled every variety of beautiful and delicate insect. And inclosing the whole of the Place Messéna were vast fans of many-colored lights, radiating out from some grotesque head and standing above gorgeous draperies.

On the west side of the square stood the pavilion of the King of the Carnival, hung in purple velvet, surmounted by a great circle of lights, studded with huge jewels. The King of the Carnival was himself now passing before it—

were several varieties of watchdogs in elaborate Parisian uniforms.

"Voilà!" some one cried out. "How excellently they sleep in Paris! Have they, perhaps, also a Madonna of the Lotus!"

They were works of genius—those two floats; a piece of subtle, piercing sarcasm that only a Latin could have manufactured. And the whole of Nice shook, as Homer says, with inextinguishable laughter. There drifted behind them a horde of specters, ghosts, wraiths—as though all the cities of the dead had emptied themselves into the Place Masséna.

Then came the great fabric of a dream—the shimmering fantastic palace of Harun-al-Rashid, raised, as by some incantation, from the baked earth of Arabia, with splendid white domes, delicate, lacy porticoes and arches, and gorgeous silk canopies, under which the houris of some divine harem danced and sang a weird, haunting, sensuous love song, with a shrill, high, passionate refrain, ending in a cry of Allah! One got the very soul of the East, languorous and soft, dreamy with desire, steeped in perfume.

Every variety of wonder followed—an endless procession of fairy extravaganza, until one believed himself come into the enchanted city of Morgana the Fay.

Midnight had arrived. The great floats were

a great figure of a jolly monarch, in striped hose and a slashed doublet, grasping in his right hand the image of a jester in cap and bells, and seated in a gigantic *fiacre*. My attention was taken from His Majesty by a storm of laughter.

A mammoth float towering to the tops of the houses was entering from the Avenue de la Gare. An opera-bouffe pirate rode seated on the head of a great dolphin and preceded by a long boat of his crew, with their oars in the air. The thing was grotesque enough, for the leviathan had been caught with a thread of a fishline. But the roar of laughter was from another cause. Here was solved the immortal mystery that had baffled Paris: The jolly pirate carried the Mona Lisa under his right arm, and his left thumb to his nose, with its fingers extended—it is the oldest gesture in the world, to be found on a frieze in Pompeii, where the little boys salute with it those who come last in the chariot races of the circus.

And following at the heels of the Bandit de Pegomas came les Gardiens du Louvre, sound asleep in the big empty picture frames, the faces inconceivably stupid and covered with spider webs. They rode propped up against the side of a rough wooden box, such as pictures are packed in, and they were drawn by a donkey, also with an empty frame around his neck; while on top of the empty box, as a delicate suggestion to the authorities,

disappearing from the Place Masséna. Crowds of shouting, singing, dancing maskers were beginning to fill the streets. The gnomes and the goblins were now abandoning the city to the nymphs and the satyrs. Fancy costumes, dainty and beautiful, supplanted the grotesque. The whole world was masked and arsenaled with confetti and bags of plaster pellets. One was seized, bombarded, whirled into a maze of dancers.

Every moment the fun became more furious and abandoned. A hamadryad, standing in a bakers' cart drawn by a donkey, declared that the donkey was a fairy prince that she would awaken into life when she could find a man to take his place. A dozen volunteered. She seized the hand of the one who arrived first, and drawing him up on to the platform of boards nailed across the bed of the cart, they began to dance *le tango Argentino,* the *danse de l'ours,* the *marche de dindon;* while the crowd hung the donkey with garlands and tramped slowly round the Place Masséna singing the songs of the carnival.

A madness as of drugs and wine was on the city, but there was no man either drugged or drunken, except now and then an English or American visitor, who staggered with champagne and, in a city full of shouting revelers, was alone brutal. One of these proved an instrument of destiny.

I was standing under the arch at the entrance to the Avenue de la Gare when I heard a woman cry out with a sharp exclamation of fear. I turned to see Madame Nekludoff struggling to free herself from the clutch of a big man in a black mask. He was dragging her by the arm, staggering, and shouting in English:

"Come on, you hussy! Come on, you hussy!"

The man was evidently inflamed with the riot of the carnival; and the woman, her hair tossed and her eyes distended, was in a very panic of terror.

I forced my way through the crowd, wrenched his hand loose and struck him in the chest. He reeled back, cursing me in English. I drew Madame Nekludoff away into the shelter of the arch. She was trembling violently.

"Oh," she said, "it is you! I am so glad!"

She would have fallen, but I put my arm round her and held her close. Her body relaxed and her head sank on my shoulder. I stood back in the shadow of the arch while the carnival rioted round me—a man come upon the very treasure of his dream! The limp, soft body seemed to cling to me; the delicate perfume of her hair was on my face. A great possessing desire came over me to gather her up in my arms and find her mouth—and kiss her. It was my one chance, perhaps, in this world and forever more! Would I take it or

let it go? But at that very instant the seizure of weakness passed. She swung out from me and stood up, but she still trembled a little and she kept hold of my hand.

"Oh! the brute!" she said. She put her free hand up to her hair. Then she began to speak, a little gasp still in her voice:

"I came out with my maid in a carriage, but the carriage could not move and we had to get out; we became separated, and I was caught in the crowd and carried along down the Avenue de la Gare. It was awful! I could not get out—and after that this beast caught me! What a horror!" She looked up into my face and smiled though her red mouth was still quivering. "I am sorry I was rude to you this morning."

She was like a child smiling through tears. Something in my bosom smothered me. I began to stammer:

"I am all alone. I do not know any one. I saw you there—down there on the balcony. I never saw a woman like you anywhere! You won't—you won't go away now?" And my hand tightened on her fingers.

She looked at me strangely for a moment. Then she smiled.

"How can I go away, my friend? I can no more get out of this crowd now than I could before you came."

"But to-morrow," I said, "you will let me see you?"

She stood for some time before she answered; and when she spoke she did not look at me, and she seemed troubled and embarrassed.

"I don't think you will understand!" She hesitated and faltered with the words. "I am not quite at liberty—to do—to do as I like. I must be careful—very careful—just now. And our women are not free as they are in your happy country. And besides, my friend, it would be no kindness to you—it would only involve you in—in—I cannot say what misfortune. You are free. Remain free, my friend! No, I must not be seen with you. I am sorry!"

"Then you need me!" I said. "Let me help you."

"No," she replied; "it is impossible. You cannot help me. No one can help me! You must go away."

"That I will not do," I said. "I must see you again somewhere."

"Oh," she said, "how I hate things like this! I cannot pretend. I wish I could be quite frank with you. I wish I could tell you. But how can I! How can I!"

Her voice trembled with emotion. I clung to the floating plank.

"Once more," I pleaded; "somewhere!"

She wavered.

"To-morrow afternoon, then, at three—at the gate of the convent on the hill above Cimiez."

She took my arm and we went out into the Place Masséna. A shower of plaster pellets fell over us. The Place Masséna was a maelstrom. Madame Nekludoff gave a little cry and covered her face with her arm. A voice spoke at my elbow. I turned to find again the big Italian and his basket of wire masks.

"Two, meester?" And he leered at me, holding up a pair of fingers.

2

There is a narrow open aqueduct threading along the great mountain over Nice—a tiny canal that carries the water for the city. I do not know in what far-off lake of snow water it begins, but one can follow it for miles, trailing gently through the olive groves, disappearing under a little shoulder of the hills to come out in the sun beyond. A stream of crystal, uncovered and flowing gently, now and then a leaf or a wisp of grass or a bit of an olive twig on its surface. The grade of the aqueduct is almost imperceptible as it rises to the gap in the mountains, a V of blue descending like a wedge into the remote skyline.

There is a path along this fairy water. I had

come up on to the hill beyond Cimiez in the tram to the place where it ends abruptly in the middle of the road. There, a little farther on, I had found a white figure among the orange trees in the garden of the convent, and we had taken this path along the idling water into the mountains.

I had believed yesterday that there could be no better background for Madame Nekludoff's beauty than black and the severities of dress; but I was mistaken in that fancy. To-day she was in white—a thing imagined in Paris, but surely tailored in Bond Street—a French adaptation of an English shooting costume; the skirt in wide plaits; the coat with a belt and patch pockets, but fitting to the figure. The material was heavy Chinese silk, as firm and thick as duck, and only to be had of a tailor in London.

Two things, however, were alluringly blended in this costume—the crisp freshness of out-of-doors and the softness of all things feminine and delicate, as, for instance, the first blossoms of the wild brier that go to pieces under the human hand. I thought the thing by its happy charm returned Madame Nekludoff to the first morning of some immortal youthfulness—as though on this afternoon, as in some Arabian story, cracking a roc's egg, I had found her sleeping within it, her chin dimpling in her silk palm.

Moreover, the background of sadness in her

face was gone. She laughed and chatted like a schoolgirl escaped from a convent. She stooped to gather the little flowers along the path, to show them to me and to point out their beauties. She would catch my arm and nestle down in the dry grasses when a bird sang, and hunt him out among the gnarled limbs of the olive trees; or she would pluck a reed and, kneeling by the aqueduct, steer the dead leaves that floated along as though they were elfin ships on some mysterious voyage. She would dip her fingers in the water and fling the drops in my face, and then spring up and run along the path, screaming with laughter like a naughty child. When I caught up with her she was changed again into a woman I had not the courage to touch. . . . And she would show me the Mediterranean, lying below like a sheet of burnished azure metal.

I think there must be some law in Nice against traveling on the path along this aqueduct, for we met no one. The whole enchanted world belonged to our two selves. We wandered on, following this lost path through the great deserted mountain of olive groves.

I do not know how the thing happened! We had come upon one of those narrow blades of the mountain that the aqueduct burrowed under. I had helped my companion over it, and we were now in a little sunny pocket, with an abandoned

olive grove rising in terraces above us, and a great gorge below, full of reeds and opening like a door on the sea. There was no sound but the drone of far-off winged things in the air. I had Madame Nekludoff's hand, when suddenly, taken by the great flood of an impulse, I swung her into the hollow of my shoulder, caught her up in my arms and kissed her. She gave a little gasping cry that I smothered on her mouth.

"I love you!" I whispered. "I love you! I love you!"

She threw out her arm with her hand against my shoulder, as though she would free herself—but the force of resistance seemed to go out of her hand; it crept up on my shoulder, then round my neck. She hid her face to escape the smothering kisses; but she clung to me, murmuring something I did not understand. I held her with my left arm, put the hollow of my right hand under her chin, and turned her face out where I could see it.

It was like the face of some dream woman rising out of a mirage of opium—the great wealth of glorious silken hair massed round it; the eyes closed; the sensitive red mouth trembling; and the delicate satin skin bloodless as a ghost. I kissed her again, bedding her soft throat in the trough of my hand.

At that moment a great voice bellowed out in

the gorge under our feet. Madame Nekludoff wrenched herself out of my arms and sprang up. Far below us a big peasant slouched along a path through the reeds, on his way to Nice with a brace of pullets. He was lonely and had broken out into one of the booming songs of the carnival. He had a voice that would have filled the magnificent distances of opera; and all unconscious of us, having the great stage to himself, he bellowed notes that boomed through the cathedral of the hills.

Madame Nekludoff stood breathing deeply and staring wide-eyed at the distant singer. She put her hands up to her hair and adjusted it with little deft touches. The color came and went in her face. Finally she went over to the little bank running along the aqueduct carpeted with dry grasses and sat down. She covered her face with her hands.

There was something too personal and delicate in this simple act to intrude upon. She was so little and sweet, and the attitude so wistful and appealing, that I sat down on the grass beside her and waited with all the restraint that I could summon to my aid. It is not easily that one, a step across the sill from Paradise, waits at the door!

Presently, with her hands remaining over her face, she began to speak hurriedly, her voice

nervous, tense—running in and out of a whisper. And a story—big, vital, packed with tragedy—emerged. She etched it out with sure, deft strokes, leaving silences and inaudible words to furnish the background and the shadows. Her voice now scurried along like a frightened thing; now took the cover of silence; now crept along in the shadow of evil vaguely to be suggested; and then it became firm and sure, where a desperate resolution had been taken and carried out; and again fearful and hurried; then low and apprehensive.

I got the story warm and pulsing with life, as though, by some divine surgery, the woman had been thrown on to the slab of an amphitheater and the thing vivisected out of her bosom; and I listened, motionless and without a sound. But this equanimity was but an aspect of the shell of the man, as the body sometimes in sleep lies prone and motionless while the mind within it lives the wildest life.

She had been sold to the Grand Duke Dimitri Volkonsky, that abandoned and profligate noble whom the Czar had banished out of Russia. Why soften the term? Sold was the only word for it! Her mother she had never known. She had lived with a decayed aunt on a little wasting estate a hundred and fifty kilometers east of Moscow.

She had been educated in a convent and very carefully watched over. Poverty seemed to lie about her, but there had been money enough to give her every comfort, even in the dreary convent. There was always something sinister in this extreme care—in the good quality of the food always somehow provided—in the fire that always burned in her room—in the exaggerated attention given to her person.

Now and then her father came to visit her. He seemed to be a man of the world, always elegantly dressed; but she was not attracted to him, uneasy in his presence and always happy when he went away. His comings did not seem to be at the call of a paternal love for her. They appeared rather to be visits of inspection. He made the minutest inquiry into all the details of her daily life, and into her studies and accomplishments, and gave precise directions. He was particularly anxious that she could speak English, French and Italian as perfectly as she spoke Russian; and being himself an accomplished linguist he always spoke to her in these languages, changing from one to the other in the middle of a sentence and at the half of an idea.

His principal concern, however, was for her person. He wrote down instructions about her food, her baths, her exercise. When he had believed her throat to be too thin he had ordered

it massaged. He had prescribed gymnastics to develop her arms. She should walk but little, for he wished her feet to remain small and delicate. Thus her life ran until she was nineteen, when—two years before—her father had appeared, ordered her possessions packed and carried her to Paris.

He took her to a house of old Paris near the Faubourg St. Germain, inclosed by an ancient wall, studded with iron spikes. Here he delivered her into the hands of a woman loaded with jewels —a big, old woman with a Hapsburg nose.

"Princess," he said, "my daughter lacks only one thing to make her the most attractive woman in Europe. Teach her that thing."

The old woman's eyes blinked above the big pouches below her eyelids.

"Eh, Michaelovitch?" she said. "Let us see." And she got up and, turning the girl about by the arm, examined her as one would examine a colt in a paddock. Then she went back and sat down in her big gilt chair. "How long do you give me?" she said.

"Six months, princess," replied the man.

The old woman considered.

"A year, Michaelovitch!" she finally said, and held out her fat jeweled hand for the man to kiss. He carried the fingers to his lips and went away.

For a year, then, this girl from a Russian con-

vent was taught the arts and mysteries of dress and of the drawing room, under the eye and the hand of this terrible old drill-master, who had been a lady in waiting to a now vanished court. The great tradeswomen of the Rue de la Paix came and explained the secrets of their craft; the designers of the great houses studied her; charts were made setting out the colors and combinations of colors suited to her person. And always the old woman taught her every trick and every art whereby, in a setting of the most conventional manner, the feminine charm may be made alluring and sensuous.

"It is not what is shown," she was accustomed to say, "but what is threatened to be shown that plays the devil."

Then one day she sent for the girl's father and said to him:

"Michaelovitch, you have now in your hand the most merchantable commodity in the whole of France. Begone with it to the market!"

Her father took his daughter then to the Hotel de Paris in Monte Carlo, and for a fortnight dangled her before the eyes of the Grand Duke Dimitri, who was forever experimenting with systems in the Casino. He showed her in all her varieties of plumage against the background of the freshness of her youth. "My daughter!" he

would say, as though his love had always inclosed her like a shell. And finally he had sold her.

The woman's voice hurried and stumbled on. Of course the conventions were to be followed! But it was a sale for all that, with a delivery of the article by the priest. The marriage was to be effected at the grand duke's château in Haute-Savoie. She was taken there by the old woman who was now with her. It was a wild, deserted district of the Alps in the severities of winter. Toward the summit was an ancient monastery, hidden by a *mer de glace*. But a great cross a hundred feet high emerged.

In the valley was a little village; and above, on a shelf of the rock, hung the red château, like a splotch of blood on the vast spotless carpet of white.

She was dressed for the wedding at the inn in the village. Then the woman with her gave her into the hands of a big monk who took her to the château, the woman remaining in the inn. There she was married. Then she was shown to the grand duke's retainers in a big, smoky hall, loaded with food and drink for a barbarian revel.

It was the custom for the lord to sit at the head of this barbarian feast and start it on the way on the bridal night. That this custom might be followed she was taken to the bridal chamber by the priest, who acted now as a guardian, and

the key turned in the lock—to wait the coming of her husband.

The body of the woman rocked; her hands tightened over her face; her voice took the cover of breaks and silences. The vast horror of the scene emerged—the horror of loneliness, of terror, of loathing. The girl stood in the middle of the great chamber, motionless with fear. A huge bed, raised on a dais, surmounted by a gilt crown and hung with curtains of silk, seemed to increase in size as under some hideous magic and crowd her into a corner. Shouts, songs and drunken voices mounted up through the walls to her. Then finally she heard the feet of men on the stair.

The menace struck her into life. She ran to the window and threw it open, intending to fling herself out. There she saw that the whole wall was covered with vines. She crawled over the stone sill and, clinging to the net of vines, began to descend. Halfway down she heard a great bawling of obscenities and oaths; the drunken noble, flinging back the monks who sought to restrain him, was coming after her over the sill of the window! He came out, one leg at a time, like some huge spider, his big body bulking shapeless in the window.

He seized the vines as she had done and began to descend; but her own fingers had already

dragged them loose or his greater weight was too much—for suddenly his body shot past her with a hideous cry, the arms extended like a cross and the straining fingers clutching handfuls of vines.

She was now at the level of the floor below. There was a ledge here and a balustrade. She dropped on to it, followed it round the face of the château to a terrace and a path that led down into the village. In the road below she found the woman who had come with her, weeping, with a shawl over her head. She received her in her arms.

A carriage that had been prepared to take this woman out of the country was waiting. The girl got into the carriage with her—and in the confusion they escaped. She did not know how badly the grand duke had been injured, but he had not been killed outright—that much she learned on the way out. Still, he must have been terribly hurt, else he would have taken some measures to intercept her. She did not know where to go; so she had come here—and here she was in all manner of uncertainty. It was only an hour of respite any way she looked. If her husband were alive he would presently seize her as a chattel that he had purchased. Hope lay in no direction that she could see. The very immunity in which she moved for the hour was sinister. She felt that

something threatened—prepared itself—was beginning to move toward her.

Madame Nekludoff rose. The declining sun and the wandering shadows lay soft about her. She stood with her arms hanging and her lips parted, the daughter of some pitiable legend; her eyes big and her face made slender by the memories of peril. I stood up then and said what any man would say, in the courage and in the vehemence of youth. She should go free of these accursed vultures—and I grew white and desperate and hot with the words.

She looked at me with a sad, adorable smile, like one who would believe in the prowess of her champion against a certain and determined knowledge. But she shook her head.

"My friend," she said, "you are fine and noble! You are, in very truth, the fairy prince! But I am not a fairy princess and this man is not a fairy beast. I am the wife of Dimitri Volkonsky!"

"But if he should die!" I cried.

Her feet on the hard path did not move, but her whole body seemed to spring up, as though cords binding down wings had been suddenly severed. Then she turned swiftly and put her cool, firm hand over my lips.

"Hush!" she whispered.

I took the hand and kissed it, and kept it in my own. And I said the words again:

"If he should die?"

She looked up slowly into my face, her eyes blue as the cornflower—hazy with a mist of tears—deep and saddening.

"Oh, *mon prince,*" she said, "things may happen like that in your fairy kingdom, but not here—not in this world."

It did happen—and in this world!

I do not know what I did on this evening or this night. At the gate of the convent in Cimiez I was banished, but I had wrung from Madame Nekludoff her permission to remain for another day—and that day, as the Fates willed it, was time enough.

That evening I doubtless smoked innumerable cigarettes on the terrace, under that halo-circled balcony; and that night I doubtless slept like one who guards a treasure. But in the morning destiny knocked on the door.

I got my breakfast and was smoking by the window, looking out over this city of celestial colors, blended like the beauties of an Oriental carpet, where any extravagance of romance might happen in the coincidences and verisimilitudes of life. There was a timid rapping on the door, and the old woman I had seen on the balcony below

entered. She seemed in confusion from some event and startled.

Madame Nekludoff wished to speak with monsieur. Would he come down to her apartment? I went down like one who travels upon wings, though step by step and no faster than the maid on the stone stair. At the salon door I stopped.

Madame Nekludoff was standing by a curtain, with her face turned away, while in an armchair, behind a table, sat a huge monk, his shoes and his clothing covered with dust. He wore the garb of those isolated monastic orders dwelling in the waste and perilous places of the earth. He seemed overcome with fatigue, like one who has traveled far. There was a bottle of wine on the table and some cold meats.

The maid closed the door and withdrew. Madame Nekludoff moved along the curtain until she finally stood before the window, but always keeping her face turned away. Finally she began to speak. Her voice jerked along as though now and then some great emotion choked it.

"Father Augustine is here. . . . He has had a long journey—all the way down from Haute-Savoie. . . . The Grand Duke Dimitri is dead!" She moved along the window, still keeping her face turned away, until she reached the door to her bedchamber. "Sit down there by the table. He will tell you." And putting her hand out to

the knob of the door she turned it and went in.

I was not, in truth, very greatly startled. I had somehow profoundly believed that this thing would happen—as a child profoundly believes in the ultimate beneficence of God. I bowed to the monk and sat down. The old man poured out a glass of wine and drank it very slowly. Then he put his hand into the bosom of his robe, took out a packet and laid it on the table. The packet was some twelve or fifteen inches long and several inches thick. It was wrapped in a silk cloth. Then he addressed me, speaking like one who is very tired.

"My son," he said, "the Duchess Dimitri will need the counsel of some one more familiar with the world than an old monk of Savoie." He paused and put his big hand on the packet. "I have been in great doubt about this matter; but it was the dying command of the Grand Duke Dimitri, and we are not permitted to disregard even the wishes of the wicked in the presence of death. That God permits the evil to work their will in this world is a great mystery—but He does permit it. How far, then, may we prohibit what He permits?

"When it became certain that the grand duke would die he had a curious seizure. He railed at Satan, calling him a sneaking and detestable coward. He had spent a fortune and years figur-

ing out a method to outwit Satan at one of his own devices; and, now that he had at last hit upon it, the Evil One had foully got him murdered before he could put it into effect."

The packet lying on the table had evidently been opened and discussed before I entered, for the silk cloth lay only loosely round it. The monk reached over and unfolded the cloth. Within it lay a great heap of hundred-franc notes and a letter with the seal broken.

"This man," continued the monk, "was the most inveterate gambler in Europe. He lived in that anteroom of hell at Monte Carlo, and he was forever laboring to invent some system of play that would win against the devices of Satan there. At the time of this mad, shameful marriage he believed he had perfected such a system, and he had prepared this money with which to test it." The monk stopped, looking down at the floor. "It was a fearful thing to see—this evil, impotent man in his frenzy! We bade him remember God and the saints; but he replied, cursing, that his concern was with Satan, who had played him false; and if he could think of anybody he could trust he would be avenged. But he could think of no one who would not take his money and betray him, as the devil had—for all he knew were in the devil's service."

The old man tasted the wine and set it back on the table.

"Then one night, as the end approached, we spoke to him of this young girl, and reminded him that this marriage would not be recognized in Russia—and that his estates would go to his family there; nor would it be recognized in France, there having been no civil ceremony. And we urged him to take some steps to provide for and establish the young Duchess Dimitri in her marital rights. The dying man was sitting in his bed bolstered up with pillows. At the mention of the Duchess Dimitri he burst out into a great bellow of exultation. He would beat Satan with her! And he had a dispatch box brought to him, took out this packet of notes and scrawled a letter. The letter and the money he charged me to deliver into her hands. . . . After that"—and the monk again looked down at the floor—"the grand duke died in great peace."

He remained silent for some moments, as though lost in thought over this strange event. Then he looked up and handed me the letter.

"It is the wish of the Duchess Dimitri that you should read it."

It was an impressive and medieval thing—this letter. In spite of the abominable way in which he had treated this woman he now addressed her in a manner stately and noble. It was a letter

from the grand duke to the Grand Duchess Dimitri Volkonsky, setting out how treacherously he had been dealt with by the Evil One and begging her to avenge him according to the plan that he pointed out. It was written in the most formal manner, but in words simple and direct, as became a great noble addressing the great lady of his house.

Then followed the directions. He was sending her one hundred thousand francs; this money was to be played at Monte Carlo according to a system he inclosed. This system would overcome the percentage in favor of the tables, insure the duchess an enormous fortune, and finally bankrupt the Casino. Thus the Evil One would be discomfited and the duke avenged. Then followed a brief description of a system of martingales, which even one but little acquainted with roulette could presently master.

The monk indicated the packet.

"My son," he said, "what shall the Duchess Dimitri do?"

I was in no doubt.

"Play the money at Monte Carlo," I said, "as the dead man has directed."

I was moved by worldly wisdom here. I knew that this woman would never take the money before me on the table, and there was no dowry for her except what might be gained by following

this bizarre request. Besides that, the thing pressed upon her as a great sinister trust, from which the romantic nature of a woman could never escape. It lay too strangely within the atmosphere of a crusade.

This thing had impressed the monk—the design of the wicked working out the will of God. Suppose the profligate dead man had, by chance, devised a system that would make roulette impossible! Even in this brief moment over the duke's plan of play I saw that it was devised to recoup losses and escape the danger of the zero.

The monk drummed on the table with his fingers.

"I do not know," he said simply—"even after long reflection. Perhaps one who has served for life with Satan, and near his person, may have learned the joint in his armor where the arrow may smite him. Who can say? By the evil are the evil overthrown." He remained for some time quite motionless; then he added: "But the Grand Duchess Dimitri cannot go into a gambling house like any common woman."

"I will go for her," I replied.

"My son," he said, "I am only an old monk, accustomed to simple peasants. This thing is beyond me. Will you tell the grand duchess what you have decided?"

I rang for the maid and asked for Madame Nekludoff.

Presently the door of the bedchamber opened and she appeared, but she did not enter. She stood on the threshold like one in great distress, and she looked wistfully to me as to one upon whom she now depended. She was all in black.

She listened without speaking a word; but when I had finished she said with a gentle dignity that she would be governed by my counsel. If I thought this bizarre trust ought to be carried out she was content. But would I please not go a step beyond the very letter of the directions? Would I play only the identical money the grand duke had sent for this strange purpose and come away when this money had passed out of my possession? She did not care whether this system won or lost. She only cared to be rid of this obligation as quickly as it could be done. . . . And then—would I come back to her?

Would I come back to her!

These were the only words that the woman seemed to speak. The others—all the others—were dead and unimportant trivialities; they were nothing. But these words were a bridge of light arching over an abyss of misery. She stood with her head lifted, her eyes dreamy, her slender face gleaming like a flower. . . . Would I come back to her!

At noon I went out to Monte Carlo. A mistral had come in from the sea and there was a fine, drizzling rain. I went up in the lift to the terrace below the Casino, and walked along on the gravel beside the great balustrade. The eternal pigeon-shoot went on in the tiny circle of greensward beyond the railroad track. A live bird would be thrown up by a trap and killed before the bewildered thing recovered its balance, and a brown dog trotted out and carried it in. The bird had no chance and the brown dog was like some abominable fate. I passed round this end of the Casino and went up the steps to the main entrance before the beautiful gardens.

In the bureau, after an examination as before customs, I got a red octagon-shaped card, with my name on it and the date, gave up my coat and hat at the window of the cloakroom, and went into the main salon of the Casino. There was the usual crowd round the tables, even on this depressing day—that silent, strained, hideously eager crowd, moving noiselessly and speaking low, as in the presence of the dead. There were no voices except those of the croupiers—"*Messieurs, faites vos jeux . . . Jeux sont faites. . . . Rien ne va plus.*"

I wanted to find a seat; so I paid twenty-five francs admission and went into the salon beyond. There was also a crowd here; but finally I got a

seat before a table, put my packet of notes down beside me, and began to play according to the Duke Dimitri's directions.

I put a hundred-franc note on the black. The black won. I took the note which the croupier gave me and put it into my pocket, leaving the original note on the black. This time the red came up. I put another of the Grand Duke Dimitri's hundred-franc notes on the black—for I was always to play the black. Again the black lost.

I was now behind; and, according to the system, to recoup this loss I must advance on the martingale. I put three hundred francs on the black. Again the black lost and again I played three hundred francs. This time the black won. The winning canceled the losses of the single hundred-franc plays, but the bank remained ahead on the first three-hundred-franc play; and to overcome this I now put five hundred francs on the black. The black came up. I had now overcome the total loss.

The grand duke's system directed that when the loss was overcome the play was to begin again with a hundred-franc note on the black. So long as the black won, the play was to remain a single hundred-franc note on the black; but when there was a loss the play was to advance on the martingale—3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15, 17,

19, 21, and so forth—until the loss was overcome. Then, no matter how far up one had gone on the martingale, when the loss was wiped out he was to begin again with a single hundred-franc note.

As the play went on I began to realize how exceedingly ingenious this system was. The maximum play permitted at roulette is six thousand francs. On a system of simple doubling with an initial play of one hundred francs, after the first loss, this maximum would be reached in five plays; but under this system the player could advance on his martingale twenty-nine times before he reached the maximum. Again, in simple doubling, the loss on the zero might be ruinously great; but, with this system, the chances on the zero were distributed.

I saw, too, how safe this system was. I seemed, all that afternoon, to be merely exchanging the grand duke's money for that of the bank; but in reality I won steadily. Often I was forced far up on the martingale, but never beyond the thirty-seven; and five times I lost on the zero—but fortunately at low plays. There was no great difference in the return of the black and the red. I had no luck; but, so long as the black returned as often as the red, I won enough on this cunning system to meet the occasional loss on the zero and gain a little on the bank.

The system was slow. It required a large sum of money; and it was as safe as human ingenuity could make it.

I was surprised to learn, however, from the whispers about me, that the Grand Duke Dimitri was mistaken when he believed himself to have invented this system. It was known to the players round the table.

The colors returned in an almost equal rotation during the afternoon. But that night I had a run of luck, and I got up from the table with a hundred and thirty thousand francs.

I was tempted to go on, but the Duchess Dimitri had bade me come away when I had technically carried out the dead man's directions. I got my coat and hat and went out. On the steps of the Casino I stopped.

The whole world had changed as under the enchantment of a magician. The mistral and the rain had vanished. A sky sown with stars arched over a city of the fairy. Everywhere were the lights, the sounds, the splendors of a pageant. I seemed to have entered, through the door behind me, into a garden party of some princely despot with the wealth of Midas and the imagination of a dreamer. And out of the stagnant air of the Casino I came now into the perfume of sweet, wet groves. I went down the steps and round the Casino on to the great terrace.

Long shadows lay across an enchanted sea, reflecting a million lights; and thin quivering lines of silver slipped in over the burnished water. And out of that mysterious hazy distance, where the water and the heavens joined, any strange craft might have entered this fairy port. All the romance of it entered and possessed me.

I got the midnight express and returned to Nice, and in fancy I put my shoulder to every turn of the carwheel, for I traveled back to the Duchess Dimitri and the paradise of life that now lay before us. The flaming sword was gone out of the gate of it now. The profligate beast was dead; his trust had been carried out and she was free!

The maid was waiting when I knocked gently at the door of the salon. No lights were burning, but the long casement windows were open and the tropical night filled the room with a soft radiance.

The Duchess Dimitri, a vague figure in this fairy light, sprang up with a little startled cry when I entered.

"Oh," she said, "you have come back! Nothing terrible has happened?"

"Nothing terrible has happened," I said. "I have brought back one hundred and thirty thousand francs." And I laid the packet of notes upon the table.

A stifled murmur, as of great anxiety removed, trembled in her mouth.

"Oh," she said, "I am so glad that dreadful thing is done! I was afraid!"

It was late and the maid was waiting at the door, but I went over and took her two hands and carried them to my lips.

"Sweetheart," I whispered, "you shall not be afraid any more forever!"

I got up early—for joy does not lie abed—got a cup of coffee and went down to smoke on the terrace and wait for the window behind the hallowed balcony to open. But another was before me—the tall, gray figure of the Prefect of Police sat at a table, trifling with a cup and a very black cigar.

"My friend," he said when I was seated and the pleasantries were over, "the consignment of money sent from Paris to the banks in Algeria was not stolen on the sea. It was taken en route to Marseilles. But we shall presently have the thieves, for the notes are marked. Every house in Europe has been advised and they cannot be presented at any bank."

Out of my observations of yesterday, but without a thought of any relation to this matter, I replied:

"But they could be played at the tables at Monte Carlo."

The body of Monsieur Jonquelle did not move, but his fingers snapped the cigar into a dozen pieces.

"*Mon dieu!*" he said very softly. "I have the head of a pig! This robbery will be the work of that big old Slav, Dolgourky, and his devil daughter. I wish he had kept to his trade of actor in the theaters of Petrograd instead of setting the police of three nations by the ears. He is a genius at impersonation, and he speaks all languages as they are spoken in their capitals. . . . There was money enough in it. . . . And that woman, in tragedy, would carry Paris off its feet at the Odéon."

He mused a moment, crumbling the bits of cigar to dust in his fingers.

"*Ah, oui!* They will remember where I have forgotten. But they will require a catspaw—for old Dolgourky is known at the tables."

I no longer listened. I got up slowly and went into the bureau to ask a question of Monsieur Boularde.

There is an Eastern tale of a magician who hypnotized a corpse so that it walked and uttered voices. I went in like that.

The proprietor met me, with his genial smile.

No—Madame Nekludoff was no longer a guest. She had gone aboard a yacht at Villefranche at five o'clock in the morning!

IV.—*The Ruined Eye*

Monsieur Jonquelle waited on the great terrace for the Viscount. Below were the endless wheat-fields, crimson dotted with poppies, the white road stretching away toward Paris and the ancient village nestling into the hill. The château was almost sheer above. One could toss a stone from its terrace into the narrow street.

The brilliant morning sun lay on the world, a vagrant wind wandering inland from the sea rippled the wheat-fields into waves, and on the horizon now and then a puff of gray dust would spring up, and a big French limousine would crawl out like a black beetle on the white ribbon of road.

"*Vraiment!* It is wonderful—this picture!" he said. "But what is God about, to hang it before the door of the meanest man in Europe?"

He was dressed for the road—a light English tweed, a gray cap and motor goggles, of which the big green lenses gave him the huge eyes of some poisonous insect. He removed the goggles, folded them together into a leather case and put them into his pocket; then he leaned over the balustrade and looked down a hundred feet to the

door of the inn, where a boy in a blue blouse wiped the dust from his gray two-seated motor. "Ah, *ma beauté!*" he said. "It is a joy to travel with a lass like you!"

The words were a mere caress, however, as the eye passed on, for the Prefect was searching the village carefully, door by door, until finally he came to a little shop, before which a gilded watch swung on an iron rod. He marked that the door under the sign stood open; then a big voice thundered behind him on the terrace.

"Who the devil are you?"

The Prefect turned about to see a tall old Englishman standing in the door tearing his card into bits with little nervous jerks of his fingers. The man had a thin, crooked nose, a sort of pale reptilian eye, and the livid color of irascible old men.

"My card would have told you, Monsieur," replied the Prefect.

"Curse your card!" cried the old man, tearing the pieces into still finer bits. "You can tell me yourself."

"With pleasure," returned the Prefect. "I am Monsieur Jonquelle."

The old man flung away the remaining fragments of the card with a derisive gesture.

"Monsieur Jonquelle, eh?" he snapped. "Well, Monsieur Jonquelle, who sent for you?"

"Alas!" replied the Prefect with composure,

"like death, I am hardly ever sent for." He looked about for a chair, carried it to the balustrade and sat down; then he lighted a cigarette. "Pardon, Monsieur," he added; "there must be quite three hundred steps in your path from the village."

The old man exploded with anger.

"Eh? What?" he spluttered. "Confound your insolence! I'll have you kicked down every one of those three hundred steps."

The Prefect blew little rings of white smoke upward into the soft air.

"Would it be wise," he said, "in view of the exigencies of chance? Somewhere, on the descent I might take an injury to my eye and claim damages in the sum of five hundred thousand francs."

"The devil!" cried the old man, a sudden calm descending on him. "What do you know about that?"

"Why, this, Monsieur," replied the Prefect, leaning over the balustrade and pointing downward with his smoking cigarette: "Yonder, I believe, is the curve in the road where Mademoiselle Valzomova's car came suddenly upon Monsieur's horse; and yonder is the oak tree into which Monsieur's horse shied; and extending south at right angles to the road is the limb that struck Monsieur on the temple, resulting in a concussion, which Monsieur advises Mademoiselle Valzo-

mova has caused the total loss of sight in his left eye, 'whereby and by reason whereof' "—the Prefect consulted a letter from his pocket as though to refresh his memory—"Monsieur le Vicomte will sue Mademoiselle in the courts for five hundred thousand francs."

"And I'll do it!" interrupted the old man. "The devil take me if I don't!"

"Unless——" continued the Prefect.

"Unless!" snarled the old man. "There is no unless. I'll sue out the writ to-morrow in Paris."

"Unless this thing that the Vicomte himself has written," the Prefect went on—"unless Mademoiselle chooses to settle with the Vicomte immediately for the damage. Well, that is what Mademoiselle chooses to do."

The Viscount was taken by surprise.

"Eh? What?" he cried. "And so the hussy is going to settle, is she?"

"Monsieur," replied the Prefect—and there came a hard note into his voice—"is it not enough to take Mademoiselle Valzomova's money? Would you insult her also?"

"Damn!" returned the Viscount. "Do I have to hunt about for one of your pretty phrases when I name an opera singer? What's the creature anyway?"

Monsieur Jonquelle looked up with a calm, inscrutable face.

"I will tell you what she is," he said: "She is one of the best women in Europe. But for her, a hundred little children would die every year in the heat of Paris. It is Mademoiselle Valzomova who sends them to the sea. And, therefore, it is Mademoiselle Valzomova who gives them life and Mademoiselle Valzomova who is the angel of a hundred mothers. Ah, Monsieur, I who know the wickedness of many know also the goodness of a few!

"And, moreover"—he paused and looked out across the incomparable valley below him—"it is Mademoiselle who offers to the weary and the wretched a blessed brimming cup of forgetfulness. Men listen to her and the bitterness of life ebbs away from them—she sings in the Place de l'Opéra and we hear the beating of wings above the iron din of the elements, and understand again honor and duty and undying love; we feel the truths of our mysterious religions and the loom of some immortal destiny.

"Ah, Monsieur, believe me, the prophets are dead; but there is sometimes born after them a greater than the prophets. *Eh bien!* Has the good God, then, only mad priests in His service?"

"Humph!" snorted the Viscount. "If the singer is such a wonder she will have plenty of money to pay for my eye!"

The Prefect looked up suddenly into the man's face.

"Monsieur," he said, "is it really your intention to insist upon a money payment from a woman for this accident?"

The Viscount exploded.

"My word!" he cried. "Has a man anything more valuable than his eye?"

"Some men," replied the Prefect, "believe themselves to possess a thing more valuable."

"Well," snapped the Viscount, "I am not one of them."

"No," replied the Prefect; and he looked over the old man slowly from crown to toe, as though he were some new and peculiar creature. "You are not one of them!"

He put out his middle finger and struck the ashes from his cigarette.

"Ah, well," he said, "if you insist upon it what can Mademoiselle do but pay? She cannot deny the accident—the resulting injury as claimed by Monsieur she might, of course, deny; but how would she sustain that contention in any court? The brain centers of vision are deep-seated and mysterious; they cannot be examined by any known appliance. And if these remote areas have been injured by a concussion the fact that all visible organs are in order does not prove that Monsieur's sight in that eye remains to him."

He paused. "It is then merely a question of the amount that Mademoiselle must pay. I hope," and he looked anxiously at the Viscount, "that Monsieur does not mean to ask five hundred thousand francs?"

"Not a sou less!"

The Prefect looked down at the red tiles under his feet.

"It is impossible!" he said. "Consider, Monsieur, how great a sum is five hundred thousand francs—half a million—a fortune in France! Why, Monsieur, I can find you a thousand men in Paris who will pluck out an eye for a tenth of the money. Five hundred thousand francs! *Mon Dieu!* the half of Europe would sell their souls at that figure! It is impossible!"

Then it was that avarice dispossessed the Viscount's irascible mood.

"Bah!" he said. "I'll warrant the singer considers five hundred thousand francs no very great sum."

The Prefect reflected.

"Well," he said, "you know how careless of money actresses are. To them it has no value. It is the need of it only that they measure. If they are down they will haggle for a franc. If they are in funds you may fill your pockets. It is so with all temperaments that create. Did not Dumas keep a bowl of gold coins on the mantelpiece from

which any one could help himself? If Monsieur were in Paris to-day he might find Mademoiselle willing to consider a sum that a week later she would think out of the question."

The Prefect flung away the fragment of his cigarette and rose.

"*Bonjour,* Monsieur!" he said. "I came out from Paris to see if the Vicomte Macdougal could not be induced to withdraw this demand upon Mademoiselle Valzomova; but it is clear, I think, that my mission is quite hopeless. Monsieur will adhere to his own ideas."

Then he stopped suddenly and turned about.

"Pardon, Monsieur," he said. "Can you tell me which turn of the highway yonder I must take in order to enter Paris on the road from Rouen? There is a sharp curve on that road about which the Department of Highways has been several times advised. It promised yesterday to put up a proper warning and I wish to see how that promise has been kept."

The old man had followed him for a step or two on the terrace.

"It is the second turn to the right," he answered. "But a moment, sir. Why do you tell me that if I were in Paris to-day I might find this woman more—er—reasonable than later?"

"Because, Monsieur," replied the Prefect, "it is to-day that Mademoiselle receives the advance

payment on her engagement at the opera. And so to-day she will have a very large sum of money in bulk, but she will not keep it. No one of them ever does. . . . Ah, *merci,* Monsieur. It is the second turn to the right then."

But the Viscount called after him:

"A word, if you please: Do you think I ought to go to Paris to-day?"

"The Vicomte will do about that as he likes," replied the Prefect.

"Wait!" And the old man followed after him. There was the lust of money in his hard, irascible face. "Would you take me up in your automobile?"

Monsieur Jonquelle suppressed a gesture of annoyance.

"I suppose I could come back," added the old man hurriedly, "on the evening train."

The Prefect shrugged his shoulders—he was not entirely able to conceal how little the suggestion pleased him; but he replied with a show of courtesy:

"If Monsieur does not object to half an hour's delay by reason of the Rouen Road I shall be very glad to take him."

The old man snapped at the invitation. It was a chance to reach Paris at no cost and he shuffled into the château for his coat. The Pre-

fect looked after him, making a gesture of contempt.

"Pardieu!" he said. "When these creatures become intolerable in their own countries they buy an estate in France! Under what curse of God are we?"

The Viscount presently returned in an old weather-beaten coat and the two men went down the steep path to the village. The great roadster was standing as the Prefect had left it, before the door of the inn; the boy in the blue blouse had wiped it clean as a jewel.

Monsieur Jonquelle put on his goggles and gloves; then he went round the car to make sure that the petrol tank had been filled. To see clearly into the opening of the tank he removed the goggles and held them in his hand. He was impatient and in no gentle temper, and there was presently a tinkle of broken glass. He looked down with an exclamation of annoyance. One of the eyepieces of the goggles had been shattered against the fender of the car.

"Diable!" he said. "It is the only pair I have!" And he began to break the cracked glass out of the rim with his thumb.

The Viscount came forward with expressions of regret. Now that he was using Monsieur Jonquelle for his own ends, he could afford to be good-humored. One would have said that the

temperaments of the two men had changed about. The Prefect was now irascible and the Viscount suave.

"Too bad!" the latter continued to say. "Perhaps you can get a pair from the innkeeper."

"No such luck," replied the Prefect; "but if by chance there is a *horloger* in this village I might get a lens put in without delay."

"There is one at the end of the street," said the Viscount. "I will show you." And he began to walk toward the sign of the gilded watch that the Prefect had marked from the terrace of the château.

The Prefect followed. He walked rapidly, like one dominated by ill temper.

"Monsieur," said the little workman when the two men were come into the shop, "a lens like this is not to be had outside of Paris." And he turned the goggles about, shaking his head.

"Well," snapped the Prefect, "you can put in a piece of window glass then—it will keep the dust out of my eye."

"*Oui,* Monsieur," replied the workman; "I can do that."

He measured the eyepiece, cut out a disk of glass and fitted it quickly into the rim. He worked swiftly and with little nervous glances at the Prefect. When he had finished Monsieur

Jonquelle threw a five-franc piece on the watch case and the two men returned to the inn.

The engine spun under the touch of the electric button and the great gray car glided out of the village, Monsieur Jonquelle driving and the Viscount in the seat beside him. They had taken the second crossing into the Rouen Road when Monsieur Jonquelle turned to his companion like one sharply seized with an important memory.

"Diable!" he said. "I think only of myself!" And putting up his free hand he unhooked his goggles and handed them to the Viscount. "Pardon, Monsieur," he said, "I had forgotten your injured eye. These will at least keep out the dust." The Viscount began to refuse, saying there was little dust and that he was in no discomfort; but the Prefect would not hear him.

"I have always heard that when one eye is lost the other is more susceptible to strain," he continued as he helped the Viscount to adjust the goggles; "and it is this brilliant sun on the white road that plays the devil with one's sight. . . . *Voilà!* We have the green lens over monsieur's sound eye! That was a lucky accident to break the left glass. Monsieur le Vicomte will be protected in both eyes from the dust and in his good eye from the glare of the road. . . . And now, *ma beauté!*" And he pressed his foot on the throttle. The car shot out like a racer under a

lash and the hedges along the roadside leaped backward.

The car traveled without any sound except a low hum as of a distant beehive. It gained speed like an arrow and the dust trailed behind in a long rolling cloud. They traveled swiftly on the white road in the brilliant sun.

It was at the beginning of a long descent toward Paris that Monsieur Jonquelle began to have trouble with his brakes, and he ducked down among his levers to see what the trouble was. As he took a turning on the steep hill, with his head a moment among his nest of levers, he called suddenly to his companion: "Is there a signal before us?"

"Yes," replied the Viscount.

The Prefect sat up, with a volley of Parisian oaths, turned the car into the hill and, braking with a twist of the front wheel, stopped against a signpost by the road a hundred meters from the curve.

"Nom d'un chien!" he cried. "Does the Department of Highways believe itself to conduct a tram that it puts up a signal like that!"

"What's the matter with it?" said the Viscount. "The letter A stands for the word to stop in your language and red is a danger warning."

"Precisely," cried the Prefect; "but what danger is there if one knows of the curve? And why

stop when the road is open? Does one take on and discharge passengers at this point as he travels into Paris, like a bus to the Gare du Nord? There should be here the usual signal indicating a sharp descent on a curve—and they put up a thing like that! . . . Well, they shall hear from me—and soon!"

He got out and tightened the brake band of his car with a heavy wrench, and the two men continued their journey. The brakes held now and the car swept down the long descent, sped away on the great road and presently entered Paris. On his way to the Place de l'Opéra the Prefect stopped before the Department of Highways.

It was strange how completely the trivial incident of a roadmark had dispossessed the great matter upon which the Prefect had set out. His mind seemed emptied of it. Placarded on the walls of Paris were the beautiful lithographs of Mademoiselle Valzomova, this idol of the opera, whose conspicuous generosity had so tremendously impressed him, and he passed them with no sign.

Moreover, by a curious ironical chance he carried into Paris this mean old man, in his dirty coat, that he might prey upon her. And yet this bitter ending to his pretentious endeavor was hidden from before his eyes—screened off by the petty error of an official of highways. By such

inconsequential incidents are the minds of mortals dominated!

"A moment, Monsieur," he said to the Viscount, bringing his car to the curb. "I wish to lay a complaint before the Department of Highways. Will you verify my statement?"

"With pleasure," replied the old man, glad to be a gadfly on any withers; and the two entered the building.

A grave man with a long lean face sat at a desk in the private office of the Department of Highways; and behind him, nosing in a ledger, stood a big Italian, with bristling, close-cropped hair. The Prefect began at once with his complaint. He had hardly got it explained when the man at the desk stopped him.

"Monsieur," he said, "do you make this charge from your own knowledge or at the information of another?"

"I saw it myself," replied the Prefect.

"And I saw it too," said the Viscount, stepping up before the desk.

The official looked up.

"And who are you?" he asked.

"The Viscount Macdougal, my fine sir," snapped the old man.

"Ah!" said the official, taking up his pen. He turned abruptly from the Prefect as though he

were a person of no concern and addressed himself to the Englishman with grave courtesy.

"Monsieur," he said, "I shall be pleased to hear you."

He listened with the closest attention, as to a distinguished person whose every word was to be marked; and on a pad before him on the desk he wrote down precisely and with care the exact statement of the Viscount Macdougal.

The big Italian, who had been deep in his ledger, now rose and came round the official's desk. He stopped directly in front of the Viscount and slowly wagged his head.

"So," he said, "you saw all this through your goggles!"

"I did!" snapped the Viscount. "What of it?"

The Italian did not reply; but abruptly in the quiet and gravity of the room he laughed. The Viscount turned on him in a fury.

"Why do you laugh, my fine fellow?" he snarled, his face turning livid.

"I laugh," replied the Italian, "because if the Viscount Macdougal saw a red letter on a black background through the goggles he now wears he saw it with his blind eye!"

"My blind eye!" cried the Viscount.

"Exactly," replied the Italian—"your blind eye! You have a green lens over your good eye

and it is a principle of optics that red on a black field seen through a green lens is invisible!"

The Viscount opened his mouth as though he would utter some awful invective, but for a moment he did not speak; then he said strangely, as though he addressed an invisible person:

"Will you tell me who these people are?"

And the Prefect, Jonquelle, replied to him:

"With pleasure, Monsieur le Vicomte—the one who writes is the Magistrate Lavelle, and the one who laughs is the oculist Bianchi."

V.—*The Haunted Door*

EARLY in April the Marquis Banutelli closed his villa at Bordighera, on the Mediterranean, and traveled to Geneva. He was in frail health, enervated by the sun of the Riviera and displeased with life.

He had intended to write a great opera at Bordighera, but he could not get the thing to go upon its legs. The Marquis blamed the commonplace times for this plague upon his opera. There was no longer anything mysterious or unknown in the world. A tram carried tourists to the Sphinx; the Americans had penetrated to the Pole—or pretended to have done so—and the English had entered Tibet.

Moreover the whole race of men was tamed; the big, wild, barbaric passions that used to rend the world were now harnessed to the plow. Men no longer climbed to the stars for a woman or carried a knife a lifetime for an enemy. The tragedies of love and vengeance were settled by the notary and the law court. Romance and adventure had been ejected out of life.

The Marquis was by no means certain he would find in Geneva what he had failed to find in Bordighera—that is to say, inspiration for his opera—though this city was the very realm of romance. It lay across the bluest lake in the world, beneath the sinister ridge of Salève; behind it was the range of the Jura; and beyond it Mont Blanc emerged on clear mornings from the sky. But he was sure to find there a bracing climate when the wind, like a curse of God, did not blow from the north.

The Marquis went to the very best hostelry and sat down in a sunny room where he could see that sight of the faërie—the great two-pointed, rose-colored sails of the stone boats descending Lake Leman.

It was early and there were but few guests—a Japanese, with a French wife; two or three English families, and a distinguished German. The German, alone, interested the Marquis Banutelli.

He was perhaps sixty-five—a commanding military figure. It was clear from every aspect that the man was a person of importance. Italy and the German Empire were now in very close relations. The Kaiser was thought to be mobilizing his armies. England and France seemed about to be forced into the field. War was in the air; one saw soldiers on every hand, and all the fierce old hatreds had risen from the fields of

Jena and Auerstädt, Metz and Sedan, as on the daybreak of a resurrection.

The Marquis inquired at the bureau, learned that the German was the Prince Ulrich Von Gratz, and presented himself. The two sat over their coffee a long time that evening in the foyer of the hotel. The talk ran upon the necessities and barbarities of war. Von Gratz was a soldier; he had gone through the Franco-German War: and his vivid and realistic experiences, the experiences of a man of action in the deadly struggle of two infuriated peoples, fascinated the Italian, who was essentially a dreamer.

The interest and appreciation of the Marquis seemed to inspire Von Gratz, and he entered into the details of that hideous barbarity by which the German armies crushed the provinces of France. The Marquis had read the La Débâcle of Zola and the tales of Maupassant, but he never until this day realized the stern implacable savagery with which the uhlan had forced the French peasant to remain a noncombatant while the German armies marched over his fields to Paris.

The acquaintance ripened into a fine intimacy.

During the day Von Gratz was not usually to be seen, and was understood to be concerned with one of those ponderous works on the science of war that engages the excess energy of the military German as a system of philosophy engages that

of the scholastic. In the evening he smoked very black cigars from Homburg and talked with the Marquis.

The conversation was in French—a language the Italian invariably used in every country but his own. The German also spoke it with fluency and something approaching a proper accent. The Marquis Banutelli remarked upon this accomplishment, and Von Gratz replied that it had served him when he had occupied the Valley of the Jura during the Franco-German War. He added that his headquarters had been at Ferney, but a few miles from Geneva; and he mentioned the further confidence that one of his objects in coming to Geneva was to go over again the scenes of his military occupancy there. But this thing he had hesitated to do. The war spirit in France had vitalized old memories. He had held the province with an iron hand. He would be remembered and not welcome.

The incidents of this district, lying so close to Geneva, interested the Italian; and, as he was accustomed to walk in the afternoon, he determined to walk there. Von Gratz envied him this privilege, and deplored the fact that the present temper of France prevented him from accompanying the Marquis; but he got maps from the concierge and marked a route which he particularly wished the Marquis to go over.

The following afternoon the Marquis took the tram out of Geneva, got down when he had crossed the hill toward Ferney, and, according to his map, set out on a little road into the country. This road, bordered part of the way by great trees, within half a mile entered France. The Marquis knew the border by the square stone, carved on the French side with a fleur-de-lis. He also knew it by the little hut of plaited twigs in which the gendarme who guards the roads out of France protects himself from the rain and the winds.

This was an unkempt country road, and such are not usually under a sharp surveillance, but to-day it was sentineled like the main road into Geneva.

The Marquis was not molested and continued on his way; but he felt that the military instincts of France were at this time particularly alert. The road continued westward toward the Jura, but the Italian turned into the long wood that lies in the low valley between Geneva and Ferney. On all sides the flowers were beginning to come out. The path the Marquis followed had once been an ancient road, but it was now overgrown and, in fact, no longer even a path. One had continually to clamber over logs and to put aside the branches of trees.

Banutelli reflected that this had doubtless been

a military road through the forest in the time of the Von Gratz occupation, and he determined to follow it. Presently it came out into a little meadow entirely inclosed by the wall of the forest.

An abandoned farmhouse stood here where the road emerged. It was a big, old house with timbered gables and a farmyard inclosed by a stone wall. The house and premises, though heavy and of sound material, were ragged with age. And this deserted house, hidden in the wood and to be reached only by an abandoned road, inspired the Italian with a sense of remote and sinister loneliness. Thus in old tales were haunted houses environed or the venue of revolting crimes.

He continued across the bit of meadow and through the fringe of forest, and found himself come almost immediately upon the main road from Ferney to Geneva. The Marquis crossed the border toward the environs of Geneva, where several gendarmes lounged on a bench in the sun before the bureau of police. And again he felt that all France was under a searching military surveillance.

That night he described the ancient road and the abandoned house to Von Gratz. He had been quite right in his conjecture. The Prince had occupied this very house when he held the province, and he had cut this road through the wood. He listened with interest to every detail. And

when the Marquis, having concluded his description, added the sinister impression he had received, Von Gratz very gravely shook his head.

Some things had happened there. . . . It was no gentle work to hold a hostile district. He sat for some time silent, his face stern with the memory, but he did not disclose the reminiscence. Again he expressed the desire to revisit this district, and again he regretted that the hostile attitude of France made it unsafe to do so.

He showed so keen an interest in all that the Marquis had observed that the Italian continued to take his walks in that direction. And thus, through the medium of another, Von Gratz was, in a manner, able to revisit the province which he had held under his heel.

He was interested in everything, but especially in the old road and the abandoned farmhouse, as—the Marquis sometimes thought—the criminal agent is interested in the place where he has accomplished a secret crime and would know how it has changed. It happened, for this reason, that Banutelli frequently chose this route; he remarked the trees that had falled across the ancient road, and the height and thickness of the bushes that had grown up in it.

Von Gratz was especially interested in every change that had taken place in the abandoned farmhouse. Did the great nail-studded door still

hang upon its hinges, and the like? He seemed to learn with relief that this door was closed; and one night, when the Marquis reported that it was open, he exhibited a marked concern, as though every ravage of time upon this deserted house was in some sinister manner correlated to his own destiny.

The desire now to see this place for himself became a sort of obsession. He inquired precisely at what points on the route one was likely to meet the peasants. The Marquis replied that he would meet no one in the wood, and that the only peasants he was likely to pass were two big old men, who had recently come to spade up a potato field in the corner of the meadow beyond the farmhouse toward Ferney.

The Marquis thought that Von Gratz was unduly concerned about entering this bit of French territory. He had only to go in civilian dress, follow the old road, and turn back before the farmhouse to avoid the peasants entirely. And when he went up to his rooms that night it was with a suspicion that there was something appalling and sinister lying back of the German's anxieties. This impression was strengthened on the following day when he received a note from Von Gratz, saying that he had determined to visit the scene of his former headquarters, and closing with the strange request that if he did not return

to luncheon the Marquis himself should come to search for him. The note prayed Banutelli, under no circumstances, to speak of the matter, and to come alone.

The Marquis was not very much concerned for the safety of Von Gratz, but when he did not find the German at luncheon, and learned that he had gone out of the hotel early and had not returned, he became uneasy, took the tram out of Geneva and crossed the French border.

The afternoon was perfect; the sun soft and caressing. The peasants were at work in the distant fields, and the gendarme dozed in his twig hut. The Marquis entered the wood and followed the old road. The buds were swelling; little flowers were beginning to appear; and he wondered how anything harmful could have menaced Von Gratz in the peace and serenity of this April afternoon. He began to be impressed with the folly of his errand; but when he stopped on the edge of the wood to look over the abandoned farmhouse he thought he saw something move at a gabled window.

He looked closely and presently became certain that a hand beckoned him. The Marquis crossed to the open door and entered the farmhouse. The house was much larger than the Marquis had imagined and very stoutly built. It had been long abandoned, but it remained sound and tight.

The Marquis' footsteps echoed on the stone stairs, and in spite of his courage he felt a sense of fear of what he might be going to meet. As he neared the top of the stairs he heard his name called, and glancing up he saw Von Gratz's face, as though it looked at him from the wall. The next moment he realized that the German was peering at him through a little opening cut in a door.

"Prince!" cried Banutelli. "What has happened to you? And why are you here?"

"Marquis," replied Von Gratz, "I am a prisoner."

"A prisoner!" echoed the Italian. "Who has made you a prisoner? I will go at once for the gendarmes."

"No, my friend," replied Von Gratz, "the gendarmes would only get me killed. My one hope lies in your courage and devotion. Please to look through the window behind you and see if the two old peasants are at work in their potato field."

The Marquis turned to the little high window behind him on the stairs, and by standing on tiptoe was able to see out. On the edge of the forest beyond the little meadow the two old peasants labored with their spades, digging up the sod. The sun lay upon their stooped shoulders and their bent backs, and a vagrant wind stirred their white hair. They reminded the Marquis of the

humble figures of the Angelus. He returned to the door.

"The peasants are there," he said. "What have these simple creatures to do with this outrage?"

"Simple creatures!" cried Von Gratz. "God in Heaven! The spirit of vengeance—tireless, patient and inexorable—has never dwelt on this earth as it dwells within the bosoms of those two peasants! Prepare yourself, Marquis, to hear the strangest thing that ever happened.

"When I entered this valley during the Franco-German War three brothers occupied this house. It was night when my advance reached the wood, and one of these brothers, coming to the door, fired a fowling-piece. When we entered he gave up the gun and explained that he had not intended to resist soldiers, but had been alarmed by a noise he did not understand. He was a fine young peasant, concealed nothing, and answered every question without evasion. It was impossible not to believe him. I would willingly have set him at liberty; but he had fired on the uhlans and an example had to be made.

"I occupied the house and imprisoned him for five days in this very room in which I now stand until his offense should be thoroughly known throughout the whole province; and at the end of that time I had him stood up before the door of this house and shot, as a warning that any non-

combatant firing on the soldiers would be thus shot against the door of his house. Each of the two older brothers came to me privately and begged me to shoot him instead of the boy; when I refused they looked at me for a long time, as one has seen an animal look at something it does not intend to forget."

Von Gratz paused.

"Marquis," he said, "you perhaps observed in the environs of Ferney an ancient chapel surmounted by a crucifix. When these two peasants became convinced that I would not take their lives in exchange for that of the boy, they went to this chapel in Ferney to pray." The German's voice descended into a whisper. "And they have continued to go there every day for forty years!"

The man's voice died out and he remained for some time silent, while the Italian endeavored to realize the vast infinite faith that no period of time could weaken, and that returned day after day, in the unfailing belief that it would in the end receive what it asked.

The voice began with an abrupt and unexpected question.

"Do you believe in God, Marquis?"

The amazed and bewildered Italian shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't know," he replied—"sometimes."

"I never did," continued Von Gratz. "But

listen! The war passed and I returned to my estates in Baden. I was young then. I grew old. I forgot this incident. But one night in the castle at Waldshut I dreamed that I was standing in the edge of the wood before this house, looking at the door. The door was closed. I seemed greatly relieved—and I woke.

"Time ran on and the dream returned. And always as the thing reappeared my anxiety about the door became greater, and my relief at finding it still closed increased, as though this closed door stood between me and some appalling doom. The dream never varied. I looked always at this door in a sweat of dread!" Von Gratz paused. Then he went on like a disembodied voice:

"One never escapes from the superstitions of his childhood. I had heard that if one touched a dead man on the forehead he would not dream of him, or if he went to the scene of a haunting obsession it would disappear. I could no longer endure this hideous anxiety that recurred always in a shorter cycle. I determined to come here and revisit this house in the hope that this dream would cease. . . . But I found all France inflamed, and I hesitated until you told me that the door was open. Then I determined to go. I dared not think what this accursed dream might become, now that the closed door was open."

The face of Von Gratz, framed in the narrow

aperture of the oak door in the dim light of this garret, appeared fantastic and ghostlike.

"I came here. When I reached the border of the wood I was seized by two men, the sleeve of a blouse stuffed into my mouth, and carried into this house and up the stairs to this room. I was thrust in and the door locked. . . . Yes, the men were the two old peasants out there. . . . They told me that from the day their brother was shot against the door they had never ceased to pray to God to bring me back here; and they had never ceased to watch for me. They had abandoned the house as a sort of trap. They gave me precisely what I had given my own prisoner—a jug of water, black bread and a Bible. And they told me they would keep me a prisoner for five days, as I had kept the brother, and then shoot me against the door as I had shot him."

Banutelli was appalled.

"Great God!" he murmured. "What a revenge! What a revenge!"

And he continued to repeat the word, as though the very sound of it projected before him all the faith and patience and barbarity of these two terrible old men. Then he turned as though to descend the stair.

"I will bring the gendarmes. The French officers, at least, are not savages."

Von Gratz stopped him.

"No, my friend—that will not do. You would get me out, to be sure, but not alive, Marquis. Do you think a German officer could be rescued by gendarmes to-day in France and not somehow lose his life in the engagement—especially if that officer was Ulrich Von Gratz? Besides, how should I be regarded by the Emperor if I were found on French soil under such conditions? What explanation could be given? What international complications would follow? . . . I have thought the whole thing out. I must depend solely on you, Marquis. My brother Rudolph is now in Basel. Go to him there; tell him this thing in person and he will come here with his servants and release me. There is time enough. You will reach Basel to-morrow; these peasants will not murder me until the five days are up, and Rudolph will act swiftly."

"But, Prince," interrupted the Marquis, "how will your brother know that I come from you? There is nothing here with which to write a message. Suppose he should refuse to believe me—or take me for a madman?"

"I have also thought of that," replied Von Gratz.

He went away from the window and presently returned with the Bible of which he had spoken—a small, thick old book with a leather cover.

"During the Franco-German War," he con-

tinued, "the officers of the division to which Rudolph and myself belonged made use of this simple device. If a messenger bearing a dispatch brought with him any sort of book, no matter what, marked with a fingerprint on any three of its successive pages ending in seven, the dispatch of that messenger was to be taken as of the most urgent necessity. I have thus marked this Bible on its seventh, its seventeenth and its twenty-seventh pages. Show it to my brother, and he will not only believe what you say but he will also know by this sign that I am in the most desperate position."

And he handed the thick old book through the opening in the door.

"You will find Rudolph Von Gratz at the Hotel of the Three Kings. And now farewell, my friend! My life will depend on your devotion! Go out of the house on the side you entered so that the peasants cannot see you from their field, flank the woods round them and return to Geneva, on the road from Ferney, as you have been accustomed to do."

The Marquis put the book into his pocket and left the house. He entered the woods and made a détour round the little meadow, keeping well within the cover of the trees; but when he came opposite to where the peasants worked he stopped.

The afternoon was entrancing; a warm vitalizing sun lay upon the earth; a breath of balmy air moved; the sounds of men and horses came to him from the distant fields; away in the blue sky the lark trilled. The mood of the world was a benediction. And the Italian shuddered!

It was the custom of poets in their tragedies to make the aspect of Nature symbolic of their motif, and it was thought that this relation struck the human mind with greater terror; but the exact reverse of that conception was true!

Under the gray roof of the distant farmhouse, peaceful in the sun, a human soul, entrapped by a supernal fantasy, awaited a doom as tragic as any in the Book of Kings! And before him, to the eye, two gentle old men digged a field that they might cultivate the fruits of the earth—while, in fact, they pursued an appalling vengeance.

The Marquis lifted his hat and wiped the sweat from his face. He looked at the two peasants, their bodies awkward and uncouth, their faces stolid; and he thought how he would have passed them by on his quest for the fierce old passions of the race. And yet these simple creatures had conceived and carried out a thing unequaled even in the Wars of Yahveh.

And this big, vivid, hideous tragedy went on, invisibly and without a sign, at the heart of this perfect day!

The man could not escape from the dominion of this oppressive idea; he continued to consider it as he crossed the fields and on the road from Ferney to Geneva. But out here in the sun, as he approached the voices and activities of men, as he observed the children at play and listened to the peasants calling in good will to one another, he found it difficult to accept as one of the realities of life the thing he had just experienced. It seemed now—here—like the grotesque fancies of a nightmare. And unconsciously, as a sort of verification, the Marquis took the Bible out of his pocket and began to look at the pages Von Gratz had named. Yes; they were marked as the German had said, with a sort of smear, as though by a finger blackened on the hearth.

He was about to return the book to his pocket when he realized that the road before him was barred by a gendarme. He looked up. He had come to the line where the road crosses out of France. On a bench before the door of the bureau of police a thin, gray man, who looked like a gentleman of leisure, sat reading a journal. The Marquis stepped back and put the book into his pocket. At the same time a second gendarme came out into the road.

"Monsieur," he said, "we are compelled to detain you."

"Detain me!" echoed the Marquis. "For what reason?"

"Monsieur will doubtless learn that later on," replied the gendarme.

The Marquis was indignant.

"I protest against this outrage!" he said. "I am a subject of King Victor Emmanuel of Italy, and I demand instant permission to proceed!"

The gendarmes did not reply, but they now advanced as though they would take the Italian into custody. At this moment the man who sat on the bench before the door put down his journal, rose and came out into the road. As he approached the Marquis he bowed.

"Pardon, Monsieur," he said, "I have some trifling influence with the authorities here and I shall be charmed to be of service to so distinguished a personage as the Marquis Banutelli."

The Italian was at a loss to understand how his name and title should be known to this stranger; but he observed that the man was a gentleman and he was grateful for any means that offered him an escape from the gendarmes.

"I thank you, Monsieur!" he said. "I shall be obliged to you—or to any one—for permission to continue on my way to Geneva. I cannot understand why this indignity is put upon me."

The stranger made a slight conciliatory gesture.

"Ah, Monsieur, nations will have their little

foibles." He looked at his watch. "And, now, if the Marquis Banutelli will do me the honor of drinking a cup of tea"—he indicated a neighboring villa—"I think I can promise him safe conduct to Geneva within the hour and the end of his anxieties."

They entered a gate of the villa and ascended a long garden that gained the summit of a hill toward Lake Leman. Here was a view unexcelled in the environs of Geneva. In one direction lay the ranges of Haute-Savoie and the White Mountain in the sky, and in the other the Jura and the incomparable valley beneath it.

At a table, on the summit of this garden, the stranger placed a chair for the Marquis facing the panorama of the Alps, and himself sat down beyond him, where he could look into the French valley and the great road. Tea was brought and while he poured it and added a bit of lemon the stranger addressed the Marquis.

"Monsieur," he began, "I esteem myself singularly fortunate in this honor. I have long wished to have your opinion upon the structure of the German opera." He made a gracious gesture, as though in deference to so distinguished an authority. "It has always seemed to me that the machinery of German tragedy is unnecessarily ponderous, weighted down with the clumsiest devices and demanding at every turn heavy, lugubrious

effects—as though the mystic German mind moved always in a dense, almost palpable atmosphere of romance. Or am I in this, Monsieur, merely misled by prejudice?"

The tea was excellent, the stranger had an engaging manner, and the question was launched upon the very sea the Marquis sailed. He was compelled to consider it; and he found his host following his words with so close an interest, such intelligent comment and so high a regard for the speaker's opinion that the Marquis was charmed.

A quarter of an hour—a half—three-quarters of an hour—fled. The Marquis was deep in the subtleties of his critique when suddenly his host pointed down to the road from Ferney.

"Pardon, Monsieur," he said, "but is not the person yonder, at this moment crossing out of France, the Prussian general, Prince Ulrich Von Gratz?"

The Marquis sprang up and turned about so quickly that he almost overthrew the table. The gendarmes were standing stiffly at attention and the big military figure of the German was striding past them into Switzerland. The Marquis caught his breath with a hissing murmur through the teeth.

"Thank God!" he cried. "He is safe!"

"Safe!" echoed his companion as though in as-

tonishment. "How could a distinguished stranger be other than safe on the soil of France?"

"But he is free! He has escaped!" continued the excited Banutelli. "He goes safely into Geneva! And I left him but now a prisoner awaiting death!"

Hurriedly and with gesticulation he recounted all the details of this sinister trap in which Von Gratz had been taken, with the supernatural pressure that had forced him to enter it, the fatal patience that received him, and the diabolic vengeance that awaited him—together with the part he had played and the message that he now carried to Prince Rudolph, in Basel.

The tall, gray man standing before the amazed Italian stooped and lighted a cigarette, striking the match slowly and with deliberation. Then he held it up, watching the flame die out, with a gentle, whimsical smile.

"Ah, Marquis," he said, "as you so aptly remarked but now in your discourse, the Germans are incurably romantic!" He threw away the bit of match with a little fillip of the fingers. "Who but a Teuton, if his object was to get something taken out of France, something he feared to carry himself and which was to be placed by his agents in an abandoned house, with the signal that the door, usually closed, should be open when the thing was ready . . . what intriguer, Marquis,

I ask it of you, but a German, to accomplish that simple end, would resort to all these involved and ponderous properties of the tragic poets, including dreams and visitations, an imaginary execution and a secret cipher, and involving an empty house tied up in a French lawsuit, and two simple old peasants who never harmed a creature in this world!"

"But, Monsieur," cried the astonished Marquis, "what thing could Prince Ulrich Von Gratz wish carried out of France, and who are you to know all this?"

"If you will permit me to examine the Bible in your pocket," replied the stranger, "I think I can undertake to reply."

The Marquis handed the man the book. He put it down on the table and, slipping the blade of a pocketknife along the edges of the leather cover, ripped it open. Within, making the thick back, were two closely folded packets of glazed cambric, crowded with drawings.

"These," he said, "are the plans of all the French forts along the range of the Vosges. . . . And I, Monsieur, am Jonquelle, the Prefect of Police of Paris!"

VI.—*Blucher's March*

It was impossible to believe that this was war.

The little village lay white in the sun; dogs idled on the doorsteps; children were in the road. The place was only a handful of cottages lying along the ridge of the hills beside the feudal château; an oasis in a Sahara of ruin.

The fight arched over it. That never ending duel of field guns. The Germans were entrenched west of this high ground and the French southeast of it. Neither could advance. The French had control of the village but they did not occupy it. The science of artillery fighting had changed. Field batteries were planted under hills now and not on the crest of them.

The struggle here had a certain aspect of permanence of which the French Captain of Artillery took advantage. He came from Tarascon and when the sun was out nothing could depress him. He hummed a song as he moved along the road. It was a song with a soft, haunting refrain:

"Ah, qu'elle est belle La Marguerite!"

His voice would go up strong and full on the opening word and down soft and sensuous on the "Marguerite." He was on his way to lunch at the château with its American owner, Marmaduke Wood.

Monsieur Wood had servants and a cellar and he sat tight with them in spite of the advancing Prussians.

For all his joyous aspect the Captain of Artillery was very much disturbed. Some one in this village was in communication with the German lines. He had tested the thing out, and he knew. Every time he moved his battery under cover of the high ground, the enemy immediately changed its fire. There was no *Taube* about. Some one signaled the range, that was the long and short of it. He had sent word to the war department in Paris and asked for a secret agent. But he watched himself as he swung along through the village.

A peasant cobbling a shoe sat on a bench before a shop. Above his head, against the wall in the sun, a bullfinch hung in a wooden cage. The peasant was about sixty, as the Captain had noticed more than once, but he was hale and strong, and he wondered why it was, that in France's desperate need he was not somewhere in the service.

The officer stopped and dismissed his refrain

with a kiss blown from the tips of his fingers into the sky.

"Old man," he said, "why don't you get a gun and fight the Germans?"

The peasant put down the piece of leather that he was stitching to the shoe and looked up at the Captain of Artillery. His face was expressionless and stolid.

"It would be of no use," he said.

"Of no use!" echoed the Captain. "How do you know it would be of no use?"

"Well, Monsieur," replied the peasant, "who should know it better than I?"

At this moment the bullfinch, in its wooden cage, touched by the sun began to whistle a tune. The Captain of Artillery started, listened, and as he listened, gradually drew himself up until he was a rigid military figure. The bird paused, omitted portions of the tune, and repeated his notes.

The Captain, standing as though enchanted into bronze, made suddenly a belligerent gesture as of one driving a short sword upward.

"Diable," he said, and he went on with a quick military stride.

At the red brick wall of the château, where the gate entered, he gave a word to the sentry and went in. It was past noon and the Captain was shown at once into the dining room.

It was a big, airy room on the second floor, lined with windows. The table was laid with a splendid cloth to the floor. There were flowers in a great bowl, and the westering sun entered. A shutter had been set to shade it from the table.

It was a table laid precisely as one would lay it in a time of peace in a villa on the Riviera. The war might have been in the moon or read out of a fairy book, for all the quiet elegance of this brilliant sunlit room.

For the second time on this afternoon the Captain of Artillery had a distinct surprise. The table was laid for three and two men already sat with their legs under it. The host, Mr. Marmaduke Wood, and a tall gray man, in an English tweed.

They had a bottle of champagne and they discussed the arias of the opera like men who knew all the songs in the world.

There was evidence of more than one bottle poured out in this talk. The American had his head, although his face was a trifle purpled, but the wine had gotten a certain hold upon the stranger. He got up a bit unsteadily when the host arose; he bowed and addressed the officer.

"I am the secret agent you sent for," he said. "I have a lot of names; Cordon Rouge will do as well as any," and he laughed in a queer high note.

Then he put his hand into his pocket, took out

a leather wallet and fumbling among the documents it held, handed the astonished Captain a piece of paper. It was a line in the official cipher from the war department.

"We send you the best man in France," it said, over a signature.

The amazed Provençal returned the paper and Monsieur Cordon Rouge replaced it in his wallet. The Captain of Artillery had cause, he thought, for this amazement. A secret agent, who made neither himself nor his mission any secret, and was named, quite fittingly it seemed, for a wine of France, was something new to him.

"Monsieur," added the agent with a gesture, "let us have no secrets from our host. I owe him that, since my admission to his table was perhaps a trifle upon faith. I said, Monsieur, that I came as your friend and guest; and he received me to his courtesy upon that introduction."

He swung about with a conscious gesture, the gesture of a man in pride.

"Monsieur Marmaduke Wood," he added, "some one is signaling the position of the French artillery to the German lines. The Captain here has sent to Paris for a secret agent, and Monsieur"—he paused, thrust his hand into the bosom of his waistcoat, and bowed in a genial fashion—"I am come to find him."

The American smiled and drew out a chair for the Captain of Artillery.

"I am honored to receive Monsieur Cordon Rouge," he said, "even upon his own recognizance."

The manners of the American were excellent even if he had come up from the stockyards in Chicago as he freely said. He had very nearly a continental address. It was the wonder of the world how these middle-class Americans took on the veneer of Europe. This Illinois packer was not over-dressed. He had trained himself almost into a military figure, with his close-cropped hair to hide the gray of one in the afternoon of life. Mobile, the Captain thought, these rich men from beyond the sea; a French bourgeois grown rich could not thus take on at middle sixty the manners of a baron.

The Provençal sat down to the excellent lunch, but his blood was hot. This creature had the impudence of Satan, to ring a bell and say that he was the friend and guest of Henri Alphonse Marie of Tarascon, a Captain of Artillery in the armies of the republic. There should be a word aside for this. . . . And with this glib assurance to force his way in to the host's table! The insolence of it was not to be endured.

"Monsieur Cordon Rouge," he said over his pigeon, "it is perhaps the privilege of the Depart-

ment of War in Paris to select my guests, but I have an unreasonable habit of choosing my friends for myself."

The agent put down his fork and looked the Captain in the face.

"Monsieur," he said, "your habit is unwise, and I beg you to abandon it—a friend is a gift of God."

"I shall be charmed to discuss that with you, Monsieur," replied the Captain, his face flushed, "when your mission here is ended. There is a bit of turf behind the château."

The agent drew a parallelogram on the cloth with the handle of his fork.

"How much turf, Monsieur?" he said.

"Enough," replied the Captain, "to kill a man on."

The agent fingered the stem of his glass.

"Monsieur," he said, "a man may be killed on a very little ground but one must have six feet of turf to bury him under."

"There is also enough for that," replied the Captain, "do you undertake, Monsieur, to provide a dead man."

"I do," replied the agent.

"Now that," said the Captain of Artillery, "is entirely satisfactory, except, Monsieur, that the element of time remains a bit vague. Shall we say," and he paused, "that Monsieur Cordon

Rouge will provide this dead man within two hours after his mission here is ended."

The agent leered over the table.

"Within two hours after this luncheon is ended, Monsieur. My mission, as you name it, is already ended."

The Captain of Artillery appeared to be astonished.

"You mean," he said, "that you know who is in communication with the German lines?"

"I do," replied the agent.

"The very man?"

The agent looked hard at the Captain across the table.

"The very man!" he said.

The Captain of Artillery, to the eye, was not disconcerted.

"Perhaps, Monsieur Cordon Rouge," he said, "you will tell us when precisely you solved this problem."

"With pleasure," replied the agent; "when I walked in the village this morning."

"And what did you see, Monsieur Cordon Rouge, when you walked in the village?"

"Now, Monsieur," replied the agent, "one man may see one thing and another man another, when he walks in a village. . . . Also, Monsieur, one may see a number of things, if he stands at a window and looks down into a village.

"As, for example, Monsieur, half an hour ago when I stood at the window yonder, I saw Henri Alphonse Marie, of Tarascon, advancing in the road. He is a Captain of Artillery in the armies of the republic, and yet, Monsieur, he sings a roundelay the refrain of which runs in his own language:

"'Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite!'

"And yet, Monsieur, mark you this, that ballad is not a song of France. It is a song of another nation, Monsieur. Observe, Monsieur;" and he began to sing in English:

"Gold on her head, and gold on her feet,
And gold where the hems of her kirtle meet,
And a golden girdle round my sweet;—
Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite."

His glass went up and his voice bellowed the refrain.

"Observe, Monsieur," he added, "that I did not stop, stare, and fall into a military attitude with astonishment at hearing a soldier in France sing a song of another nation!"

"And why should you, Monsieur?" said the Captain with composure.

"And why not, Monsieur," continued the agent, "since Henri Alphonse Marie of Tarascon, a Captain of Artillery, did so stop, stare, and fall into

a military attitude at hearing a bird in a cage whistling a foreign tune."

"But, Monsieur," cried the Captain, "did you hear that tune—it was Blücher's March!"

The American, who began to be uneasy for the peace of his guests, now politely interfered.

"Monsieur Cordon Rouge," he said with a courteous bow from the hips, "is there not a considerable difference in these two cases? France is not at war with England but allied with her. We are not concerned to hear an English song sung in a French village. But to hear a martial tune of the German Empire whistled in a French village at this time, must, I admit, surprise one. The German advance has not reached this village. Captain Marie must be permitted some astonishment. Whence came this bullfinch, and how, Monsieur, did he manage to hear Blücher's March in a French village? . . . And especially, Monsieur, would Captain Marie be all the more concerned since the presence of a spy somewhere about is clearly indicated by the German fire."

He paused and turned to his guest from Tarascon.

"Captain Marie," he continued, "may I inquire who it is in the village that possesses this extraordinary bird? I must confess to sharing with you a certain astonishment."

"The shoemaker," replied the Captain.

"Then, gentlemen," continued the American, "let us by all means have this shoemaker here with his bullfinch and inquire into this affair?"

The Captain wrote an order and the host sent it out. But the secret agent seemed not altogether pleased.

"Monsieur," he said, addressing the Captain of Artillery, "how do you know that this bird is whistling Blücher's March?"

"I have heard it on several days," said the Captain dryly.

"Then you knew before to-day that it whistled this march?"

"No," replied the Captain, "I did not. I heard the bird behind the shop, and in certain parts of the cottage, but never until to-day before the door. That is to say, my attention was never before sufficiently directed to this bullfinch to determine the tune he whistled."

"And how did you determine it to-day?" said the secret agent.

"Monsieur," cried the Captain, "I know that tune when I hear it."

"Are you certain?" returned the agent.

He leaned back in his chair and began to whistle. His foot beating time moved out from under the cover of the tablecloth. He gave the tune precisely as the bullfinch had given it in the sun before the shoemaker's door. He hesitated and repeated

but he could not whistle the march to its end.

"Diable!" he said, "what are the notes I omit?"

"Alas, Monsieur," replied the American, "I cannot help you out. I never heard the portions of this tune that you omit," and he ran the notes that the agent had given in a lower key.

The agent's foot under the martial air beat heavily on the floor. And suddenly the Captain of Artillery observed a thing that flooded him with light. The agent's shoes were not alike, one of them was a sabot, and he remembered that the shoe the old peasant stitched was leather!

At this moment the sentry brought in the shoemaker and the bullfinch in its wooden cage.

Before any one could speak, the agent addressed him in a tone of menace.

"Answer what you are asked," he said.

One could not tell whether it was a threat upon the old peasant to be frank or to be cunning; to say all he knew, or to answer every interrogation with deliberate care. Then he made a gesture as of one abandoning the witness to the Captain of Artillery.

The officer turned about in his chair.

"This bird," he said, indicating the bullfinch with his finger, "whistles Blücher's March."

"Yes, Monsieur," replied the peasant.

"That is a German tune."

"Yes, Monsieur."

"Who taught him?"

"I taught him, Monsieur."

"Then you are a German!" said the Captain of Artillery.

"No, Monsieur," replied the peasant, "I am a Frenchman from the Province of the Jura."

The agent interrupted. "I can vouch for that," he said.

"Monsieur Cordon Rouge," replied the Captain of Artillery, "I shall be obliged if you do not interrupt me. In spite of your commission I am determined to look a little into this affair for myself."

"Oh, by all means," returned the agent, "but I beg you to remember, Monsieur, that one does not become a German merely because one knows a German tune."

For a moment the Captain did not go on. He sat looking at the peasant. The sun lay about the floor. Outside the great artillery duel went on booming over the château.

Presently the Captain continued his examination.

"Before your shop to-day," he went on, "you said it was of no use to resist the Germans. That seemed a strange expression, Monsieur, and I inquired how you knew that it was of no use. You replied with a still stranger expression, 'Who

should know it better than I?' These were suspicious words, Monsieur; what do they mean?"

The old man looked about. He carried something under his arm wrapped in paper. He put it now into his blouse. Then he began to speak slowly and with repetition.

"Well, Monsieur, who should know better than I that it is of no use to fight the Germans? Did I not try it, Monsieur, in 1870 . . . I and my six brothers at Weissenburg? My brothers, they were shot to death, and I, Monsieur, was taken to a village far up . . . where there are forests in the sky. And there, Monsieur, a thing happened that taught me to hate the Germans. . . . But to hate them, Monsieur, as an animal hates the fire. To hate them with a knowledge that one cannot harm them.

"I always remember it, Monsieur, day and night. The death of my brothers, . . . that was war. But I was a boy then, Monsieur, and proud. I was a Frenchman, Monsieur. It was the shame they put on me that I will remember always. I used to say, with tears, Monsieur: 'Jules . . . Jules Martain, you are made a shame to France. You ought to die. You ought to have the will to die.' But I could not do it. One may starve to death, Monsieur, yes, if he is lost in the mountains, or if he sees no bread. But with the loaf before him—he cannot. . . . I know, Monsieur,

one may believe he can. One may think he has the will to die. But it is not in nature, Monsieur. He will endure the shame and eat the bread of shame."

And he began to ramble on, adding one comment upon another, as though the end of the story had escaped him.

The secret agent sat with his eyes half closed. The American was watching the peasant with attention. The Captain of Artillery brought him up:

"Come, Monsieur," he said, "what is this extraordinary story?"

The peasant went on then.

"The prison was on the public square. There was a window with bars. . . . Yes, Monsieur, they could have put the food in at the door, but no; the Junker Lieutenant must have his sport. Soon everybody came to listen and to laugh, Monsieur; to hold one's sides with laughter. . . . A French prisoner whistling Blücher's March for a loaf of bread. . . . No, Monsieur, I did not know what the tune was in the beginning. I whistled only the notes the Junker Lieutenant whistled. . . . Bah!"

And forgetting where he was, the peasant spat violently on the floor. Then he looked curiously from one of the three men to the others.

"Ah, yes," he continued, "a man grows old and

strange. And so, Monsieur, I keep a German bullfinch in a cage, and I teach him to whistle Blücher's March for a crust of bread. . . .

"Try him, Monsieur, it is the truth I speak."

The Captain of Artillery broke off a piece of bread and extended it toward the cage.

Immediately the bird began. It paused, hesitated and repeated the notes, as the Captain had observed it to do in the street. But now he noticed with astonishment that the notes omitted were precisely the ones which Monsieur Cordon Rouge had himself omitted a few moments before, and that the bird paused and repeated precisely as the secret agent had done. The performances were identical to a note.

The American too was astounded. But the Captain of Artillery for all his southern blood had himself in hand.

"One thing more, Monsieur," he said to the peasant, "why is it, if you please, that I have observed the bullfinch to be whistling sometimes in one part of your cottage and sometimes in another?"

"Ah, Monsieur," replied the old man immediately, "it is the sun. He is a happier prisoner than I was, this German bird. He will sing, Monsieur, when the sun enters his cage."

Then as though he suddenly remembered the

parcel in his blouse, he took it out and handed it to the secret agent.

"Monsieur," he said, "I have brought your shoe."

The man met the unexpected with composure.

"Mercie," he said, "I am not accustomed to a sabot," and he put on the shoe.

Then he stood up.

"Monsieur le Captain," he said, "shall we shoot this peasant for a spy?"

The officer looked him in the face.

"I think not," he said.

"Reflect, Monsieur," continued the agent, "he is found with a German bird that whistles a German tune in a French village."

"I think," replied the Captain with deliberation, "that it is not this peasant that is signaling to the German lines."

"It is another, perhaps?" inquired the agent.

"Perhaps," replied the Captain.

"The German bird, Monsieur?"

"I am convinced, Monsieur Cordon Rouge," said the officer with sarcasm, "that the German bird has nothing to do with the German fire."

"Then, Monsieur," cried the secret agent, "be prepared for the surprise of your career."

He took the cage and carried it to the window facing the German lines. He moved the shutter back so that the sun fell on the cage. Immedi-

ately, as the peasant had affirmed, the bullfinch began to whistle. Then presently a strange thing happened, the German fire ceased, there was a period of silence, and as the bird finished, it began with redoubled fury.

"Captain Marie," cried the agent, his voice ringing, "where do the German shells fall now?"

The officer sprang to the eastern windows overlooking the French guns, a moment he searched the country with his field glasses. Then he swore a great oath.

"Nom de chien!" he cried; "they fall a hundred meters beyond us, in the edge of the wood."

The agent brought the bullfinch back to the table and set it down.

"Monsieur," he said, "there is a great man in France who tells us that chance in the ultimate instance is God. I have reflected upon that and I approach his opinion. But for the barb of a wire that cut my shoe this morning, I should not have stopped at this peasant's cottage, and so I should not have observed this bird, I should not have learned this peasant's extraordinary story, and I should not have been present here at a curious adjustment of God's providence."

"Extraordinary story!" cried the Captain. "It is a tissue of lies. The man is a Prussian spy."

The Captain's face was purple with excitement.

The American sat unmoving like one in the presence of things unreal.

"No, Monsieur," replied the agent, his voice calm, the evidence of wine gone out, "and that is one of the strange things about this business, the peasant's story is true. He was held a prisoner in a mountain village of Baden as he says. . . . We have some report of it. That is to say, Monsieur, we have certain pieces alone and disconnected, but we could not have put them together except for the inscrutable moving of this chance which is God.

"And now, Monsieur, will you court-martial the German bullfinch?"

"Monsieur," replied the officer, "I do not pretend to understand you, but I do understand that by some means the German lines are signaled by this bird which I find in this peasant's possession. I shall not bother to unravel the mystery. I shall wring the bird's neck and put the peasant before a firing squad."

"A moment, Monsieur," continued the agent with authority. "A little while ago I promised that you should have a dead man for your bit of turf. But I did not promise that you should select him. I think, Monsieur, that I distinctly said that I would select him—that I would provide you with a dead man . . . and so I shall, Monsieur."

But the Captain of Artillery had the insistence of his discipline.

"Monsieur Cordon Rouge, or whatever your name may be," he said, "I am willing to accept you as one in the secret service of France, if you like, but I am not willing to accept you for the military authority in this village."

And he got up. But he was interrupted. The American, who had been altogether silent, arose. His face was like plaster but he maintained his irreproachable manners. He bowed from the hips, clicking his heels together.

"Permit me to select the dead man!" he said.

And he whipped an automatic pistol out of his pocket. But before he could make his sinister choice, the fingers of the secret agent seized his hand and doubled it back with a snap against the wrist. The weapon exploded, and the American slipped down in a heap on the floor.

"Mon Dieu!" cried the Captain of Artillery, "you have killed an American gentleman!"

"No, Monsieur," replied the secret agent, "I have merely killed a gentleman who was not able to whistle all of Blücher's March."

"Diable!" cried the officer, putting out his hands in a hopeless gesture, "how does this Blücher's March signal the German lines?"

"Monsieur," said the secret agent, "it does not signal them at all. Your host signaled them by

the simple device of opening and closing the shutter to his window. . . . I observed this, Monsieur, when I passed through the village this morning. Closed, the window shutter meant your batteries were advanced; opened, it meant they were retired. The Germans had only to watch that shutter with a mariner's glass."

"Monsieur," said the Captain of Artillery, in a sort of wonder, "who is this dead man and who are you?"

"I can answer that," said the old peasant, taking up his bullfinch from the table as though no event of importance had occurred, "the dead man is the Junker Lieutenant who shamed me, and the other is Monsieur Jonquelle, the Prefect of Police of Paris."

VII.—*The Woman on the Terrace*

Monsieur Jonquelle, the Prefect of Police of Paris, was a moment late.

An angry voice reached him at the turn of the path. It was a tense, low, menacing voice. The words were not clear, but the intent in the voice was unmistakable. For a mere fraction of time he remained motionless as in some indecision; then he went forward swiftly.

It was evening. The soft colors of a sort of twilight day were on the Mediterranean. The many-colored city of Nice was lying below the mountain of olive-trees and the tropical gardens of the villas of Cimiez. The whole scene was from a country of the fairy; the romantic frontier of some kingdom of wonder legend.

There were two persons on the long terrace of the villa when Monsieur Jonquelle approached. The villa was small and exquisite—a sort of jewel-box hidden in a garden of tropical luxuriance, inclosed by a high wall surmounted by a tile border. The villa was rose color. The tiles of the terrace and the border of the high wall were also rose

color. It was a dainty and sensuous bit of the world, as though raised by some enchantment out of the baked earth of Arabia.

Monsieur Jonquelle interrupted a tragic moment.

A woman sat in a chair midway of this terrace. It was one of those beautiful invalid-chairs made for the out-of-doors by that Italian genius which seeks always to add beauty to the decorative aspect of a garden. The chair was white. The gown of the woman in it was blue; it looked black in the soft evening light and against the rose-colored villa and the white chair.

The woman did not move. Her small, shapely head, as from fatigue, rested against the high back of the chair. It was crowned with a great weight of hair, as yellow and as heavy as gold, built up into a wonderful coiffure that resembled in its vague outlines the helmet of Minerva. Her hands and her elbows lay on the arms of the chair. Beside her, a step beyond, the man who had arrived a moment before Monsieur Jonquelle stood in an attitude of menace. The visible personality of the man was puzzling. That he was an American one could instantly see. But one could not so easily determine his status or his habits of life. He had some of the physical characteristics, some of the tricks of dress of one engaged in an artistic vocation; some of the swift, accurate, precise ges-

tures of one skilled in the plastic arts. But there was a vigor and determination about the man that one is not accustomed to find in a mere artist—an element of ruthless decision, and of swift acts as of one accustomed to peril in his trade.

The attitude of the man and the voice that had reached Monsieur Jonquelle at the turn of the path were unmistakable in their menace. But the woman did not move. Neither the sudden appearance of the man, nor his words, nor his menacing gesture had in any respect disturbed her equanimity.

The scene changed as at the snap of invisible fingers. And Monsieur Jonquelle came up on to the terrace. The man fell into the posture of one at ease before an interrupting visitor, and the woman looked up languidly as though undisturbed; as though no human drama, however tragic, could disturb her; as though she were forever beyond the stimulus of any human emotion.

It was clear that the man had no knowledge of Monsieur Jonquelle, but to the woman he was evidently a familiar figure. His appearance must have been an immense surprise to her, as the appearance of the man beyond her had been, but there was no evidence of it in her voice.

She did not rise. But she spoke softly.

"You do me a conspicuous honor," she said.

"You will have been very much concerned about me to search me out here."

Then she presented the man beyond her.

"Martin Dillard," she said, "an American—Monsieur Jonquelle."

The Frenchman and also the woman, one thought, observed the American closely to note any recognition of either the name or the appearance of the new arrival. But there was none. He did not know either Monsieur Jonquelle or his trade.

She touched a bell concealed somewhere in the arm of the chair. A maid appeared. An added direction brought two chairs. The American sat down where he was, but Monsieur Jonquelle carried his chair a little beyond the woman to the edge of the terrace. He put down his hat, his stick, and his gloves.

"I am fortunate to find you," he said; "I hoped to arrive a moment earlier."

The woman smiled.

"In that event," she said, "you might have failed to find my friend, Martin Dillard, the American. You will be interested, I am sure, to meet him and to know why he is angry."

She turned slightly toward the American. Her face in the soft light seemed smiling, but it was, in fact, inscrutable.

"Monsieur Jonquelle," she explained, "is an

old acquaintance—a very old acquaintance. I have no secrets from him. He will know, I am sure, precisely the reason for my flight here and your cause of anger against me."

She turned again toward the Frenchman.

"Is it not so, Monsieur?"

The American had a strange, sullen, puzzled expression. But Monsieur Jonquelle laughed.

"Alas!" he said, "it is the disasters of my acquaintances with which I seem always to be concerned, and, unhappily, their affairs are usually known to me."

He bowed slightly to the American.

"If Monsieur will permit," he said, "I shall be charmed to verify Madame's prediction. Monsieur has followed to inquire why the house in the Faubourg St. Germain, in the old quarter of Paris, happened to burn down."

The American moved, as in anger, abruptly in his chair.

"Yes," he said, "that is just precisely what I wanted to know."

Monsieur Jonquelle rose. He took a cigarette case from his pocket. It was of platinum exquisitely traced with a complicated arabesque. He opened it and presented it to the woman in the chair. She declined.

"It is denied me," she said, "as all things are now denied me."

The American also refused, and Monsieur Jonquelle returned with his cigarette to his chair on the border of the terrace.

"I, also," he said, speaking as he went about the lighting of the cigarette, "as what Madame has so courteously called 'an old acquaintance,' am interested to know why this house at the corner of the Rue de St. Père on the Faubourg St. Germain has burned to the ground. It will be necessary to make some explanation to the authorities of Paris. They will be curious about it. And as this old acquaintance of Madame it has seemed to me that I ought to obtain and take some measures to present an explanation to the authorities in Paris."

He continued to speak, in the slow business of igniting the cigarette.

"There is no question of insurance, nor the right of any property owner in the matter. Monsieur Martin Dillard owned this house by purchase some months ago, He carried no insurance on it. It was stored only with his own property and used only by himself with the charming assistance of Madame. There was not even a servant about. The doors entering the house were all fitted with a special lock, a complicated American lock with two keys only, one for Monsieur and the duplicate for Madame. The windows were securely closed with heavy shutters. The house was

wholly inaccessible to any but these two persons, and it was the exclusive property of Monsieur. If it had not burned, we should not have been concerned about it. Mysterious romances of the heart do not provoke an inquiry in Paris. It is the only capital of pleasure where the heart is free; but the city authorities are concerned with fires. When the flame emerges from the heart, Paris is disturbed, and when it reduces to ashes an ancient house on the Faubourg St. Germain, some explanation must be given."

He paused again. He had now gotten the cigarette lighted. And he sat down.

"Madame has correctly expressed it. I am an old acquaintance, and I am more than that; I am an old acquaintance who is very much interested to get Madame's explanation before the authorities in Paris as early as I can manage it. Her flight after the fire seemed to be unwise. Even I had very considerable difficulty to find her."

The American spoke abruptly.

"You seem very much interested in 'Casque d'Or.' "

Jonquelle's voice was in a sort of drawl.

" 'Casque d'Or,' " he said. "The expression is supremely happy. Madame's golden head used to be the wonder of Paris when she came up with it like a Minerva through the fluid floor of Paris. Ah! yes, I am very interested—I have been always

interested, as an old, a very old, acquaintance. And I am interested again, more, perhaps, than Monsieur can imagine."

The American spoke again abruptly.

"You seem to know all about 'Casque d'Or.' "

Again Monsieur Jonquelle drawled his answer.

"Ah! yes," he said, "from her golden head to the blue pigeon delicately outlined on her hand between the thumb and the forefinger—every detail of Madame has been of interest to me—has been, I may say, of anxiety to me. And now I am concerned about the explanation for this fire."

The American broke in. His voice was no longer restrained.

"I don't see what you've got to do with it," he said.

Monsieur Jonquelle did not at once reply. He looked at his cigarette as though it were somehow unsatisfactory; puffed it a moment until the tip glowed; then he tossed it over the edge of the terrace into the bushes.

Almost immediately the bushes parted and two persons came up on to the terrace. They were footmen in a rather conspicuous foreign livery. They paid no attention to either Monsieur Jonquelle or the American. They addressed themselves with apologetic diffidence to the woman in the chair. They explained that a parrot belonging to the Princess Kitzenzof, who occupied the great

villa above, had escaped and was concealed somewhere in the thick shrubbery of Madame's garden. Would they be permitted to search for it? The woman in the chair moved her head slowly in assent. Then she dismissed them with a gesture. They went down off the terrace and toward the rear of the villa in their search, and the woman in the chair addressed the American.

"You must believe," she said, "that Monsieur Jonquelle is an old acquaintance and that this explanation is not to be denied him. Neither are you to be denied it. You came here for it precisely as he has come for it. You have followed me here, trailing out my flight, as he has followed. The two of you arrived nearly on the moment, and I shall be pleased to include the two of you in my explanation. You were demanding it as Monsieur Jonquelle arrived—with some heat, if I correctly remember."

The American replied in his abrupt manner.

"I don't understand this thing," he said. "But I do want to know how this house happened to burn while I was absent. You are the only person who had a key to it, and you must have burned it or you would not have run away and hid yourself —now, what's the story?"

The woman had a bit of delicate lace in her fingers. She put it up a moment to her lips. Then she spoke, addressing her two guests. Her voice

was slow, serene, and detached, like one who speaks without interest, without emotion, and without any concern for effect. It was like a voice from a mechanical appliance, having intelligence, but no will to feel.

"I have been attached to Monsieur Dillard," she said. "There was a fortune before us, an immense, incredible fortune. The anticipation of it bound me to him, and so the burning of this house must have been an accident. The lure of a fortune is the only influence that does not loosen as one advances into life, in a world where presently every emotion fails. Therefore Monsieur Dillard had a right to feel that he could trust me, since my interest in this fortune was identical with his own."

She paused, and seemed to address Monsieur Jonquelle directly.

"You will be concerned, Monsieur, about the mystery of this fortune. It was no dream, and depended upon no uncertain hazard of chance. Monsieur Dillard is an artist—an artist with a genius for turning art to a practical use. There have been greater artists than Monsieur Dillard in production, but not in methods by which art can be made to serve a practical purpose; that is to say, can be made to produce a fortune. It is the life-work of Monsieur Dillard not to produce art, but to bring the artistic skill of the masters

of art to his practical purposes. And, in this department, he has no superior in any country. The house in the Faubourg St. Germain was in fact a storeroom. It was, at the time of its destruction by fire, literally packed with masterpieces—beautiful works of art of an incredible value."

She did not move the position of her body in the chair. But she again vaguely touched her lips with the handkerchief in her fingers, a bit of filmy lace.

"Monsieur," she said, "there have been in the world three men who are supreme in what is perhaps the highest of all artistic production. I shall name them to you: Monsieur Whistler, the American; Monsieur Helleu of Paris, and Wagenheim of Munich."

She moved a trifle in her chair. Then she went on.

"The misfortune of producing a masterpiece in oil or in water-color is that one copy only of this masterpiece exists, and if by any misfortune it is destroyed, every adequate evidence of its beauty has disappeared forever. This is the unfortunate feature attached to the work of all the great masters. But it is a misfortune that does not attend the etchings of Monsieur Whistler, Monsieur Helleu, and Herr Wagenheim. The beautiful faces of the lovely Americans preserved by the etchings of Monsieur Helleu can be

reproduced in any number. That beauty does not depend upon the jeopardy of a single picture."

Her voice seemed to advance, but not with the stimulus of any emotion.

"It is not commonly known," she said, "that an extreme skill is required to obtain in the prints all the beauties of these etchings. The prints are commonly made by persons having only the usual workman's skill. But it was always realized by the masters of this art that the extreme and delicate beauties of their etchings could only be produced by an adequate skill, by a skill almost equal to their own, in the printing of the picture. This skill constitutes the peculiar genius of Monsieur Dillard—a skill which he has striven to perfect, and which he has finally brought to the highest excellence.

"He labored in the house in the Faubourg St. Germain for a long time and with an incredible patience, until he became the superior of any man living, and the house, as I have said, was literally packed with the most beautiful and the most valuable reproductions of this character in the world. This accumulated treasure represented the incredible fortune which was before Monsieur Dillard and myself.

"It was on the night that he had gone to Bordeaux in order to make some arrangement for the removal of the treasure that the unfortunate fire

occurred that wiped out our fortune in an hour, leaving Monsieur penniless and myself with but the ruin of another illusion. And it happened, Monsieur, in the simplest fashion."

There was absolute silence on the terrace before the villa. The vaguely blue sea seemed to underlie a world of amethyst. Heavy odors were in the air. A little beyond the terrace the leaves of a flowering vine moved where the footmen of the Princess Kitzenzof searched as noiselessly as ghosts for the lost parrot. The shadowy figures of the two footmen were outlined to the woman in the chair, and, perhaps, to Monsieur Jonquelle, but they were not visible to the American.

He sat like a tense figure in some organic medium, grim, rigid; always in that immobility which seemed to await the next word before it flashed into violent life; as though Madame's words were the delicate implement of a vivisectionist moving about a nerve which it never touched, but which it constantly menaced.

"It was the simplest accident," the woman repeated in her placid voice. "The original etchings of an immortal like one of the three which I have named are priceless—they cannot be replaced.

"Out of the fear that the house might be entered, after the reproductions had been made, these originals were placed under some rubbish in the basement of the house. This basement had

not been entered for a long time, and when these originals were concealed there, care was taken not to disturb the appearance which this room presented of not having been opened for an incredible age.

"It was low, with an earth floor. The ceiling was of wooden beams dried out and beginning to decay and as inflammable as tinder. The whole of this ceiling was hung with cobwebs, laced over them, hanging like veils in shreds.

"On the night of the disaster, before leaving the house, I went into this basement to make sure that the originals stored there remained as we had placed them. It was late, and I took a candle. This was a fatal indiscretion. When I arose from an examination of the place where the etchings were concealed, the flame of the candle came in contact with the hanging spider-webs, and immediately the whole ceiling flashed into flame. In an instant it seemed to me the entire ceiling of the room was on fire. I had barely time to escape before the room was a furnace.

"In terror, I let myself out of the house. As the basement of this house was without windows, the fire was not discovered until I had gotten entirely out of the neighborhood of the Faubourg St. Germain.

"I was so overcome, so numbed by this incredible disaster that I did not stop to consider any

result. I wished to escape from Paris—to conceal myself somewhere. I thought of this villa, but I did not dare to take the train from the Gare de Lyon. I traveled in a motor, winding southward from France, not directly, in order to confuse any one who might endeavor to follow."

Again she touched her mouth with the lace handkerchief. There was a faint red stain on it. She looked at the stain, but without emotion, and presently added:

"But I did not succeed. Monsieur Dillard and Monsieur Jonquelle have been able to trail me here with an equal facility, it seems, and within almost the same period of time. I cannot have managed my travel with discretion."

She stopped abruptly. For a moment there was silence. The two men beside her did not move, but their aspect changed. The American seemed to relax; his tense energy to ebb. The menace in him changed to an aspect of disaster; on the contrary, there came into the posture of Monsieur Jonquelle a certain tenseness. He spoke, addressing the American.

"Monsieur," he said, "is it true that the basement room of this house was thus hung with cobwebs?"

The man replied as though his jaws were stiff.

"Yes," he said, "the whole rotten ceiling was hung with them. I always went in with an electric

flash—a candle—good God! What an accident!"

Monsieur Jonquelle arose.

"Monsieur," he said, "this was no accident. I will show you."

The villa had long been closed. Insects had had their will with it. He went over to a shutter, unhooked it, swung it a little open, removed an immense cobweb, and came back to the border of the terrace.

The American, amazed and in a profound interest, moved to where he stood on the border of the terrace before the woman in the chair. The woman alone seemed beyond any concern. She neither moved nor spoke. She smiled vaguely, maintaining her posture of repose. The American could not conceal his profound interest.

"Not an accident!" he said. "What do you mean?"

Monsieur Jonquelle held the web up in his fingers, struck a match, and touched the web with the flame. There was no flash. The filaments of the web shriveled a little under the heat.

"I mean," said Monsieur Jonquelle, "that a spider-web is not inflammable, and therefore the basement of this house could not have taken fire from the flame of a candle."

After that, two events seemed to happen as though they were timed. The woman laughed,

and the infuriated American lunged toward her; but Monsieur Jonquelle's foot caught his ankle with a swift outward turn, and the man plunged headlong on the terrace. He got a heavy fall, for all the vigor of the infuriated creature was in action.

What followed seemed to attend with an equal swiftness. The two footmen of the Princess Kitzenzof were over the prostrate figure. Instantly his hands and feet were secured; a gag was in his mouth, and they had removed him.

It was all like a flawless scene in a drama, rehearsed to a perfection of detail. In thirty seconds it was ended.

"Monsieur," said the woman in the chair, "you are very clever, and your agents are perfect."

She did not move during the whole violence of the scene, and her voice was now in no whit changed. It was the same detached, unemotional voice. She removed her hands from the arms of the chair and extended them, the slender wrists together.

"Do you wish me, also, to accept the *gage d'amour* of the *Service de la Sûreté?*"

Monsieur Jonquelle did not at once reply.

He went back to his chair. He lighted a cigarette, and he remained for some moments like a man at ease. Then he spoke.

"Tell me, Madame," he said, "why did you de-

stroy this house in the Faubourg St. Germain?"

The woman replaced her hands on the arms of the chair.

"Monsieur," she said, "at the end of life, in the face of a death that is inevitable, I have suddenly come to realize a thing that has been an inscrutable mystery to me."

She extended her hand, on which was a plain, narrow, worn, gold band.

"This bracelet," she said, "worth, perhaps, a dozen francs, was given me by Paul Verlain, a boy who loved me. He was killed at the Marne."

She moved her hand, taking up an immense necklace of pearls, matched and priceless, that hung almost to her knees.

"This necklace," she said, "was given me by Count de Lamare. He was killed in the great allied advance on the Somme."

She extended her hand to include the place about her.

"This villa," she said, "was given me by the Marquis de Nord. He died at Verdun."

She paused.

"Monsieur," she said, "I, a child of Montmartre, an apache, called 'Casque d'Or' from the effect of my yellow hair, which I had been taught to put up as though it were the headdress of Minerva; I, who had faith in nothing, realized that these

men—Paul Verlain, who loved me, and who also loved life; Count de Lamare, who loved me, and who also loved pleasure; the Marquis de Nord, who loved me, and who also loved power—these men loved something other than me, or life, or pleasure, or power; loved it infinitely more; loved it beyond any measure of comparison, for they left these things and went eagerly to death for it.

"I thought about it, Monsieur. It obsessed me."

She suddenly rose as with a single gesture, as though she had been lifted to her feet by invisible hands.

"Then suddenly, Monsieur, with a flash of vision, on that night when I was alone in the house in the Faubourg St. Germain, I understood this thing—I saw that the work in which Monsieur Dillard was engaged—that the prints with which the house was literally packed—would help to destroy the very thing which these men, Paul Verlain, Count de Lamare, and the Marquis de Nord, had given their lives to save."

She spoke with a sudden, eager vigor.

"It would help to destroy France—and, therefore, I took a candle in my hand and burned it. Do you know what the valuable prints were with which this house in the Faubourg St. Germain was crowded on that night?"

"I do," replied Monsieur Jonquelle. "Or I

should not have taken these elaborate precautions to secure the American, Dillard.

"The house in the Faubourg St. Germain was packed with conterfeit notes of all the high-denomination paper currency of the French Republic, printed, by this man, from plates etched by the German engraver, Wagenheim of Munich."

VIII.—*The Triangular Hypothesis*

The man's loose body seemed to have been packed into his clothing as though under a pressure. There was the vague note of victory in his voice.

"Monsieur," he said, "no dead Frenchman has ever been valued to us at less than fifty thousand francs. He may have been a worthless vendor of roast chestnuts before the Madeleine, but if he died in Stamboul, he was straightway worth fifty thousand francs. You will observe, Monsieur, that your government has already fixed the price for murder."

The Prefect of Police looked across the long, empty room at the closed door.

"But was this dead man a citizen of the Turkish Empire? We seem to have a memory of him."

The Oriental smiled.

"Citizens," he said, "are of two classes—your Foreign Office laid it down—the citizen which is born, and the citizen which is acquired. Each are valued to us at fifty thousand francs, as your schedule in the indemnities to the Sublime Porte

so clearly set it out. Dernburg Pasha was *acquired,* Monsieur. But he is dead! And the indemnity for him, as you have so admirably established it, is not subject to a discount. . . . You came from the Foreign Office, Monsieur?"

The Prefect of Police bowed. He put his hand into the pocket of his coat as with a casual gesture, his fingers closing over an article that lay concealed there.

The Envoy went on:

"I found the Minister Dellaux of an unfailing courtesy; if a subject of our empire has been murdered in Paris, an adequate indemnity would be paid."

The scene at the Foreign Office, when he had been called in before the Minister, came up for an instant to Monsieur Jonquelle. The tall, elegant old man had been profoundly annoyed. This murder came at a vexatious moment, at precisely the moment when the Foreign Office was pressing for the indemnity on the French subjects slain in Stamboul. The very argument had been unfortunate. Stamboul must be made safe, and here was Paris unsafe! Here was Dernburg Pasha dead in the Faubourg St. Germain.

Monsieur Jonquelle had made no reply to the Minister. He had come down to the house in the Faubourg St. Germain of Paris; he had gone over it; he had examined everything; but he had made

no comment. Either he had arrived at no conclusion, or else he had a large knowledge of the affair, coupled with some definite plan.

It was an old house, maintaining in its essentials a departed elegance. The floor of the drawing-room was of alternate blocks of white and black marble, laid down like a chess-board. There was a door at one end leading into a small walled garden. On the other side of the drawing-room, directly opposite, there was another door of precisely the same character leading into a sort of library—the room in which Dernburg had been found in the morning, dead on the floor.

To the Envoy of the Turkish Government in Paris, this assassination had the aspect of a diplomatic affair. He had gone at once to the Foreign Office with his demand for an indemnity, and then he had come here into this drawing-room and sat down before the door until the matter should be settled.

"Monsieur is satisfied?" he said. "He has seen everything?"

"I have not quite seen everything," replied Monsieur Jonquelle, his glance traveling to the slight bulge in the man's tight-fitting waistcoat pocket, "but I am entirely satisfied."

"The evidences are complete, Monsieur," said the Envoy, smiling. "Dernburg Pasha lived alone in this house. Late last night a Frenchman called

on him. They were in the room yonder together. The windows were open, although the shutters were closed. Persons passing on the street heard the victims distinctly—the voice of a Frenchman, Monsieur, and the voice of Dernburg Pasha. Is it not true?"

"Unfortunately, Monsieur, we cannot deny it. It is precisely the truth."

"And it is true, also, Monsieur," the man went on, "that these voices were raised as in anger or as in contention upon some point. The words did not carry accurately to the persons in the street, but the inflections of the words and the menace in them were not to be mistaken. It is established!"

"Quite established, Monsieur," replied the Prefect of Police. Again the Oriental smiled.

"And it cannot be denied that Dernburg Pasha is dead. He was found this morning on the floor of the library yonder, with his throat cut—Monsieur has himself observed the indicatory evidences of this assassination. . . . The late visitor"—he looked up sharply—"Monsieur admits that he was a Frenchman?"

"Ah, yes," replied the Prefect of Police, "the man was a Frenchman."

The Envoy went on with his summary of the evidence.

"The late visitor, a Frenchman; the quarrel; the dead man remaining in the library; the spots

of blood on this floor that dripped from the weapon in the assassin's hand as he went out—he escaped from the door yonder into the garden and thence into the street: it is all certain, Monsieur?"

"It is all quite certain," replied the Prefect. He paused then:

"But while the events are certain, I am not precisely certain that we have the same conception of them. For example, Monsieur, will you tell me how, in your opinion, the assassin escaped from the garden into the street? This garden was not used; the gate leading into the street is nailed up. I should be glad of your opinion on this point."

"With pleasure," replied the Oriental.

"The man escaped from the garden in the simplest fashion. He climbed over the wall, Monsieur. The wall is of no great height. It is entirely possible."

Monsieur Jonquelle lifted his eyebrows like one relieved from a perplexity.

"Quite possible," he said. "An assassin could have climbed over the wall without the slightest difficulty. I am obliged for your opinion on this manner of escape, Monsieur."

For a moment he seemed to reflect; then he addressed another question to the Envoy.

"Monsieur," he said, "there are blood drops on this floor." He looked down at the marble extending to the closed door of the library beyond

them. "I should be glad to know how you think they came here."

"The explanation is entirely clear," replied the Turkish Envoy. "The assassin went out in haste with the knife in his hand, and these blood drops dripped from the point of it."

"That would be possible, Monsieur," replied Jonquelle. "That might happen!"

The Oriental stooped over a little and glanced along the floor.

"You have observed these blood drops, Monsieur? They are quite clear."

"I have observed them closely," replied the Prefect of Police. "There are seven of these blood drops. They are about the length of a man's step apart, and they are each clearly visible on a white square of the floor. Your explanation seems admirable, Monsieur."

He turned suddenly from a contemplation of these evidences into a vague casuistry.

"Monsieur," he said, "I have thought a great deal about chance evidences of crime. Do you suppose there are any laws of chance?"

The Oriental seemed to reflect.

"The very word 'chance,' Monsieur," he said, "precludes the running of any law. Events which result from the operation of law are naturally outside of the definition of the word 'chance.' "

The Prefect of Police did not pause to discuss

this comment; he went on, as though the reply were merely an interruption of his discourse.

"Events," he said, "all indicatory evidences in criminal investigation, we divide into two classes: those which happen by design and those which happen by chance. By *design* we mean by the will and intention of some individual, and by *chance* we mean all those events which happen outside of such an intention. Would you think, Monsieur, that there would be any distinguishing features, by virtue of which one might put indicatory evidences of a crime under one or the other of these heads?"

He continued as though he had entered upon a subject which engaged his attention too closely for the pauses of a dialogue, as though his inquiry were a mere form of statement and not intended for an answer.

"It is an immense and fascinating field for speculation. It seems to be the persistent belief of every human intelligence that it can, by design, create a sequence of indicatory evidences, which will have all the appearance of a happening by chance. But after long reflection and the study of innumerable instances, I have come to the conclusion that this thing cannot be done. It is my opinion that no human intelligence can grasp the vast ramification of events with a sufficient comprehension to enable it to lay down a sequence of

false evidences that will have, at every point, the aspect of a chance happening."

He did not wait for a reply. He seemed to lose all interest in the subject with the closing word of his final sentence. He turned abruptly to another phase of the matter.

"Monsieur," he said, "what, in your opinion, was the motive for this death of Dernburg?"

The Oriental replied at once.

"I do not know that, Monsieur," he said. "But does it matter? We are not concerned to establish the motive for this murder. I do not care even to establish the identity of the assassin. We have established that he is French, and that is sufficient for the indemnity. You may determine the motive, if you like."

"I have already determined it," replied Jonquelle.

"And what was it, Monsieur, since you have determined it?"

"It was despair!" replied the Prefect of Police. "Do you know what Dernburg Pasha was doing in Paris?"

The Envoy's eyes narrowed. He looked at Jonquelle a moment as in a furtive inquiry.

"I do not," he said. "What was his mission in Paris, Monsieur?"

"You will be surprised to learn it," continued the Prefect of Police. "Dernburg was undertak-

ing to falsify a work of art. It was a very remarkable work of art, and one of value. The persons who originally produced this work of art expended a great sum of money, an almost incredible sum of money, to perfect it. If one could falsify it successfully, one could make a fortune at the venture. Dernburg knew this. He had thought about it for a long time. He had conducted a great number of experiments. Finally he was satisfied that the thing could be successfully done, and he came here from Stamboul, took this abandoned house in the Faubourg St. Germain, brought with him his devices, and prepared to undertake the great thing which he had in mind. Then, Monsieur, before the thing could be accomplished, the mysterious visitor appeared; and this morning Dernburg is dead."

It was evident that the Oriental was profoundly puzzled.

"I do not understand you, Monsieur," he said. "You say that Dernburg Pasha had perfected a method by which he intended to falsify a work of art?"

"Yes, Monsieur."

"Then he was called upon by one who knew of this method and wished to rob him of it?"

"No, Monsieur."

"Then by those to whom the original of the art

belonged, and wished to prevent this falsification?"

"No, Monsieur," replied the Prefect of Police. "Dernburg Pasha's death resulted from a sense of despair."

Jonquelle took his hand from his pocket, revealed the thing upon which his fingers had closed when he sat down to this conference. He opened his hand so that the thing was visible. It looked like a little square box of some white substance, as of marble or chalk or alabaster. It was not larger than two inches square. It was, perhaps, an inch thick, made in two pieces. There was a tiny hole, like a keyhole with a beveled edge, on the line where these pieces joined. The box had a heavy rubber band about it. It lay for a moment exposed in the palm of Monsieur Jonquelle's hand.

"I have here," he said, "the thing that was the cause of this man's death. It was also the cause of his misfortunes leading up to this fatal morning. It has been an obsession with him. In the German Empire he undertook this thing. His design was discovered, and he fled to Turkey. But he took his obsession with him, and when the war was ended, he saw a method of getting an indemnity out of France with it—a method by which he could enrich himself at the cost of France. He worked out his plan carefully; he came to Paris;

he got this house. He was ready to put his plan into effect when, unfortunately for him, the mysterious visitor of last night appeared.

"Dernburg was shrewd, unscrupulous and farsighted. But he was not shrewd enough, and he was not farsighted enough. The stranger, who came to see him last night, knew all about him, knew every detail of his activities, knew the big plan that he had in mind. He had watched him, had followed his career. He knew the very day that he came to Paris. He knew his object in taking this empty house in the Faubourg St. Germain. He knew every step of the secret arrangements which Dernburg had perfected for the carrying out of his scheme; and at the opportune hour he entered this house. These are the facts, Monsieur, which I have accurately ascertained, which are true beyond doubt."

"And so," said the Oriental, "this mysterious stranger finally ran Dernburg Pasha to earth here and killed him."

The Prefect of Police arrested the man's discourse with a gesture.

"You travel, Monsieur," he said, "a point beyond my conclusions. Do we know that this midnight visitor is the assassin? We must consider the evidences as they are presented to us."

"The evidences are conclusive of this fact," replied the Envoy, "if circumstantial evidences

can ever be conclusive of a murder. Here is the opportunity, the quarrel, the dead man remaining in the library, blood drops falling from the weapon on this drawing-room floor as he hastily crossed it, and the escape over the wall of the garden."

"But, Monsieur," said the Prefect of Police, "where is the motive? The writers on the value of indicatory evidences, in the investigation of a criminal case, tell us that there should be time, opportunity and motive. The time, Monsieur, and the opportunity are here, plainly indicated; but the motive? Where shall we look for that?"

The Oriental turned, as with an inspiration, in his chair.

"Why, Monsieur," he said, "you spoke at considerable length upon the motive. You seemed to know it quite well. You conceal, as you have indicated, the somewhat concrete evidence of it in your hand."

"Quite true, Monsieur," replied the Prefect of Police; "but you will observe that it is I who am familiar with this motive. It is I who have what you are pleased to call 'this concrete evidence' in my hand. And that brings me to an interesting hypothesis with three phases to be considered. Let us consider them, Monsieur! I name them in the order in which they occur to me: first, Monsieur, that I killed the man; second, that you

killed him; and third, that the agency that killed Dernburg Pasha is no longer living in this world."

The Oriental turned suddenly, his face contracted and tense, but his voice firm.

"Very well, Monsieur," he said; "whither do these suggestions lead you?"

Jonquelle continued in an even voice.

"To arrive at that," he said, "we must first consider the evidences which have led us to believe that Dernburg was killed by the man with whom he quarreled last night in the library. Now, if you please, Monsieur, we will look a little at the indicatory signs."

He paused.

"There is always this disturbing feature about circumstantial evidence, the trick of pointing in the direction that one is going. If one has a conclusion, one will find that the circumstantial evidence supports it. You have a theory, Monsieur, that this visitor was Dernburg's assassin, and consequently, to you, the indicatory evidence supports that theory. But, Monsieur, I have the theory that the visitor was not the assassin, and I bid you observe how the indicatory evidences will turn themselves about in order to support the theory which I maintain. Take, for example, these blood drops on the marble floor of the drawing-room. In support of your theory, they have fallen by hazard from the assassin's knife in his flight, and

you would cite them as confirmatory of your theory.

"Now, Monsieur, I would cite them also as confirmatory of mine.

"You will observe that each of these seven blood drops has fallen on a white square of this checkered marble floor. There is no drop of blood on a black square. Why, Monsieur, should these drops appear only on the white squares? I consider that fact with my theory in mind, and I conclude that they so appear because the one who placed them there wished them to be seen. We cannot conceive that he would undertake to create evidence against himself. And it is beyond our conception of coincidence that each of these seven blood drops should, by accident, have fallen precisely on a white square when there was an equal number of black squares intervening. Therefore, Monsieur, these evidences did not come by chance; they came by design."

He continued like one who recites the details of a formula:

"I find my theory also confirmed at a farther point. You explained to me, when I inquired, that the assassin, after fleeing through this drawing-room into the walled garden, had escaped by climbing over the wall, since the gate was nailed up and had been so nailed up for a long time. Now, Monsieur, I caused this wall to be exam-

ined. The whole of the top of it is coated over with dust. At no point has any of this dust been removed; consequently the assassin did not escape by climbing over the wall, for if he had undertaken to climb the wall at any point, his body, in that labor, would have removed the coating of dust. You see, Monsieur, I do not find your indicatory evidences designed to support your theory. They seem rather conclusively to establish my own."

He made a vague gesture as though to dismiss the matter.

"And so, Monsieur, we find ourselves before the triangular hypothesis! Did I murder Dernburg Pasha, or did you, or was he, in fact, murdered at all?"

The Oriental looked at the man in a sort of wonder.

"He was surely murdered," he said.

The Prefect of Police spoke like one in some reflection.

"It is by no means certain."

"Not certain?" echoed the Envoy. "The man is dead!"

"One may be dead without having been murdered," replied the Prefect of Police. "It is possible that the hand that gave Dernburg Pasha his fatal wound is no longer alive in this world."

The Turkish Envoy made an exclamation of surprise.

"You cannot mean that Dernburg Pasha was murdered by a dead man!"

"It is a conceivable theory," replied Monsieur Jonquelle, "that Dernburg Pasha was struck down by a hand that we can no longer consider to be living.

"But if you please, we will take up these theories in their order. Did I murder Dernburg Pasha? It is an interesting hypothesis, and I should be glad to consider it at some length. But it seems to require no extended deductions to conclude it. We have shown that the mysterious visitor who called on Dernburg last night was not his assassin, because the evidences which seem so to indicate were laid down by design and did not come about by accident. They were laid down by the intention of some person, some person who wished to establish that this visitor *was* the assassin. But the visitor himself could not have wished to establish that he was the assassin; consequently he could not have made these indicatory evidences, and therefore he was not the assassin of Dernburg Pasha."

He paused.

"And now, Monsieur, as I was the visitor who called on Dernburg Pasha last night, it must be

clear that I was not the assassin that struck him down. These conclusions may seem to interlock with a slight obscurity. But if you reflect upon them, Monsieur, you will observe that they are sound and convincing."

There was a moment's silence. The Oriental did not speak, and the Prefect of Police continued:

"Now, Monsieur, we approach the second hypothesis: did you murder Dernburg Pasha?

"Here, Monsieur, one finds himself confronted with certain difficulties. You took charge of this house the moment it was ascertained that the man was dead."

The Envoy interrupted:

"I did, Monsieur. As a representative of the Turkish Government, it was my duty to take charge at once of the property of one of its murdered citizens. I came at once and took charge of it."

"That is true, Monsieur," continued the Prefect of Police. "You came as you had the right to do, and you took over this house as it was your duty to do. And from this base we may go forward with the hypothesis in its first inquiry—namely, did I create these false evidences on the floor of this drawing-room, or did you, or did the agency not now living undertake it?

"Now Monsieur, let us consider these suggestions in a reverse order. If Dernburg Pasha was

struck down by a hand not moving alive in the world after he died on the floor of the library yonder, then such a hand could not have gone forward with the manufacture of these false evidences of his assassination, and we may dismiss it. I cannot have manufactured them, Monsieur, because it is not conceivable that one undertaking the assassination would construct evidence of his crime to convict himself. Therefore, Monsieur, by elimination, we seem to arrive at the conclusion that it was you who manufactured them."

The Envoy's face seemed to form itself into a sort of plastic mask.

"Now," Jonquelle went on, "if you manufactured them, Monsieur, it was with a deliberate object. That object would be to fasten the crime upon another. But one does not undertake to fasten a crime upon another without an adequate reason in himself. Now, what reason, Monsieur, could you have had for wishing to establish that I, who called upon Dernburg late last night, had accomplished his murder and fled, carefully dropping splotches of blood on the white squares of the floor of this drawing-room, and escaping over a wall covered with a coating of dust which I did not remove? What could have been your object in undertaking to establish these facts, if you were yourself guiltless of his death?"

The man's reply was quite simple and without emotion.

"Why, Monsieur, should I wish to assassinate Dernburg Pasha?"

"Did you not wish to take over this house?" replied the Prefect of Police. "And if you took it over, you would take it over with what it contains. Let me show you, Monsieur, the treasure that it contains!"

He stooped over, slipped the point of a knife-blade under one of the large white marble squares in the drawing-room floor, and lifted it up.

These squares had been laid down on wooden sills, nailed together, and floored over underneath. Each square had, therefore, a sort of wooden pocket beneath it. This wooden pocket under the white square that Monsieur Jonquelle removed was filled with gold pieces.

The Oriental, bending over, made a profound exclamation of surprise. He remained immovable in an overwhelming wonder. That the man was amazed at something of which, up to that moment, he had not had the slightest conception, was clearly evident.

Monsieur Jonquelle permitted the marble square to go back into its place, and he returned to his chair. The Oriental sat down beyond him, speechless in his amazement. The Prefect of Police continued to speak as though the man's concern were not a thing which he had observed.

"And so you see, Monsieur, we have here the motive, the opportunity, and the construction of

these false evidences, to indicate that you were the assassin of Dernburg Pasha. And again I beg you to observe how fatal it is to proceed with indicatory evidences when one wishes to establish a theory. It is fortunate, Monsieur, that it is I who considered these evidences against you, for it is I who know that Dernburg Pasha was dead when you arrived in this house."

He paused.

"And from the wound in his throat, I knew at once what hand it was that inflicted it—a hand not now living!"

"The hand of a dead man!" echoed the Oriental. "You mean the hand of a dead man?"

"I mean the hand of the dead Dernburg Pasha," replied the Prefect.

"The wound began heavily on the left side and tailed off to the right. That is the slash of a suicide. Death wounds, inflicted by one intent on taking his own life, are always inflicted on the left side, because they are undertaken with the right hand, and if they are done with a knife, they begin with a heavy incision that tails out as the knife is drawn to the right—as the strength of the person undertaking to inflict the wound fails. Suicidal wounds, when inflicted with a sharp instrument, have always these evidential signs. They cannot be mistaken."

Monsieur Jonquelle arose.

"Let me clear this mystery," he said. "Dernburg Pasha was one of the most accomplished counterfeiters in the world."

He opened his hand.

"This device, which looks like an alabaster box, is a mold made of plaster for the purpose of counterfeiting one of the largest gold coins of the French currency. Dernburg came here, took this house, carried forward his undertaking until he had stored the squares under this drawing-room with false coins. Then when he had finished—when he had got the coins molded, gold-plated and hidden, ready for the business of their distribution, I called on him last night! It was my voice that was heard outside. I showed him that he was at the end of his tether—that the house was guarded; and I came away leaving open to him the only escape he had. He effected that escape with a razor drawn across his throat."

Monsieur Jonquelle paused, his voice firm, even and unhurried.

"You appeared, Monsieur, a little later, and seeing an opportunity to obtain an indemnity from France for a murdered subject of your country, put the razor into your pocket and clumsily daubed the white squares of this drawing-room floor with the evidential signs of an assassination."

IX.—*The Problem of the Five Marks*

I TRAVELED up to Ostend with Monsieur Jonquelle, the Prefect of Police.

There was never one seeking the solution of a mystery who was left so wholly in the dark. My father had sent me over from America, but I came under sealed orders. I think his motive was more to test me a little in the world than to put me into a problem with the *Service de la Sûreté*—that detective department of the great police system of France.

I did not know there was a mystery in the affair until I came with my sealed orders to Monsieur Jonquelle.

I knew, of course, that my great-aunt was dead and that there were complications of some sort; but there were always complications, I imagined, in the settlement of estates in a foreign country. Still, if I had reflected, I might have seen something significant in the fact that I was sent to the *Service de la Sûreté* instead of a banking house or a solicitor. My father was at the head of a financial house of some importance in the world; he would make no mistake.

Monsieur Jonquelle smiled when he read my sealed orders:

"And so I am not to leave you to the depravity of Paris!"

He looked sharply at me. And then his expression changed. He seemed to fall into reflection, fingering the cord of his monocle, his eyes vaguely on me.

Had I perhaps seen the "Review of Toy Land" at the *Folies Bergères?*

I had not.

"I shall put you down, Sir Galahad," he said, "in the city of Ostend, while I look about a bit in Belgium. You will require to be hardened by adventures."

I slept that night at the Hotel Lotti and journeyed on the following day to Ostend. I learned little at the *Service de la Sûreté,* but I learned enough to know that my great-aunt's death was involved in something puzzling. She was unmarried, rich, eccentric, and almost unknown to us. I asked Monsieur Jonquelle how she died.

He looked me over as one might look over an infant at a prize show and then he answered I would be too young to understand that!

Too young to understand what had killed my aunt! I, who had a degree from Harvard and was about to enter my father's business!

I tried with a certain dignity to break through

the man's facetious manner. Would he kindly tell me how my aunt had died? Why, certainly he would tell me: she had been killed, and he was searching France for her assassin. But I must not get the conception of an Apache with a knife. She had suffered from no act of violence, no hand had touched her; there had not even been a will to death on the part of her assassins. And yet she had been killed. And he, and every intelligence of the *Service de la Sûreté* labored to find a solution of the problem.

In Ostend adventure awaited me!

It was there in the group of hurrying people, as I got down from the car a step behind Monsieur Jonquelle; a girl's face caught for an instant and then lost in the crowd.

But her face and the manner in which she had regarded me remained.

It was a lovely oval face under a mass of abundant straw-colored hair, and with great blue eyes. But the lure was in something more than this exquisite face. It was in the expression that changed as by some enchantment in the moment that I had a vision of her; that expression, anxious and disturbed—startled—like a frightened wild thing when I caught it first in the swaying crowd, changed as it regarded me; an immense surprise, then a sort of wonder, and then some

light as of a sudden daring purpose appeared, luminous as with a sort of deviltry.

I said nothing to Monsieur Jonquelle but I followed him to the Maison Blanc with a certain sense of interest.

I would find that face. Easily I shall find her, was the belief I held; and easily I found her, was the fact that followed.

Monsieur Jonquelle had departed on the Brussels road and I sat over my breakfast in the dining room that looks out on the long narrow street that runs landward through the city of Ostend from the Digue de Mer. It is a cobbled paved street of shops and little markets and there was a busy moving of peasant figures in it: baggy-trousered fishermen shuffling in their wooden shoes and Flanders women in their native dress, picturesque and vivid.

I watched the mass movement in the long street for some time before I got down to the details in it. Then I noticed a big, sturdy dog harnessed to a little cart standing in the street below my window, beside a small grocer's shop.

I got my hat and stick and sauntered out. It was a heavenly day, with a soft air from the Channel and a brilliant sun. As I came out, the door of the grocer's shop opened and the girl I was setting out to seek was there, in the sun,

before me. She looked like a heavenly doll in her peasant dress.

She smiled when she saw me, the corners of her mouth dimpling; and she spoke to me in a queer lisping sort of foreign English:

"Monsieur is an American?"

"Yes."

"How nice!"

The sympathy, the frank admiration in the words were adorable. I felt before her smile in that moment that no gift of God could equal being an American.

"You came last night from Paris . . . with the father?"

She held up the warning finger of a little, white, doubled hand. "I saw . . . does the father perhaps observe us?"

I laughed, and added the explanation. The man was not my father. He was Monsieur Jonquelle, the Prefect of Police of Paris. And he did not, perhaps, observe us! He had gone on to Brussels. She was glad he had gone on. Why did I, "so nice," travel about with a Prefect of Police?

I explained that he was concerned with some affair of his trade in Paris that took him on to Brussels; I came to idle and amuse myself in Ostend.

She looked about her in the street with a

troubled air. Leopold, her dog that drew the cart, was getting old, and like a man in years, would have his way. He was all right on the great road but he was quarrelsome in a crowded street. She had been waiting for the people to finish their morning affairs and leave her an empty way for him. But the street grew only the more densely crowded and she must go. Would I help her to the great road?

I would have helped her to the world's end!

And on either side, at the dog's muzzle, we threaded our way carefully through the long street across the environs of Ostend to the wide road that runs behind the sand dunes through the flat fields to the north.

She prattled like a child at every step with all the simplicity and curious interest of a child; a thousand questions that trod upon one another's heels and hardly waited for an answer—like some friendly tot by a peasant's fireside who asks about one's intimate and reserved affairs and discloses in return the names and habits of the barn fowl.

When we reached the great road, she tucked herself into the tiny cart and bade me adieu. And before I could realize what had happened she was gone. She smiled back at me and called something which I did not hear. The dog hur-

ried and the tiny cart drew away rapidly on the long road toward the north.

It was all so like a fairy story that I remained motionless in the road.

I returned to the Maison Blanc, but it was for luncheon only and a brief reflection; what I would do was already determined. I would search that road to the north. I set out on foot. One has more leisure to observe when one goes alone with a stick in one's hand.

I found fields about me separated by wide ditches, then the thin line of a village extended along the road. And beyond that the road divided. The sun was half down the sky as I turned back. I was approaching the village when that fortune of events that seemed to attend me extended an unexpected favor, as I passed a little house surrounded by a wall with a white door opening on the road.

As I drew near, within a dozen paces of the door, some one flung this door violently open and rushed out, nearly falling in her haste. It was the girl I sought, and with two mighty strides I caught her. She turned like a wild thing in my arms and then, when she saw who it was, with a little gasp relaxed.

"Oh!" she murmured, "it is you; did the good God send you?"

For a moment she went all limp in my arms,

trembling; then she sprang up, clutched my hand and took me with her through the door, and directly into the cottage.

The door from the path opened into a room that the girl evidently maintained for herself, and beyond it in the one adjoining, in a chair beside a window, sat a big old man, his hands supported by the wide arms of the chair and his great bald head fallen forward. I thought for a moment that he was dead. But when I put my hand on him the pulse beat in his temples and his hands were warm, and in a moment his eyelids slowly opened, and I saw that the man was alive and conscious.

The girl, who had followed at my elbow, drew me gently away through the door. She bade me wait until she should return; and went back into the room, closing the door behind her.

This was no peasant's room. It was bright with chintz. The little women's things about in it showed taste and delicacy. Even a certain luxury of life was indicated. And in the leisure I had time to observe the place. There was a prim little garden outside inclosed by the white wall, and in a corner of it stood the cart and the dog harness; the great dog slept on a bed of dried grass and leaves. It was a peasant cottage, but improved and livable, made charming in fact.

I was in this mood of wonder when the girl

entered with a tray, a teakettle, and some dainty porcelain cups. She was composed now and smiling, but her face was white. She arranged the tea things on a little inlaid folding table and drew up a chair for me. Then, while the water boiled, she cleared the mystery with which we were environed.

Her father was a paralytic, growing with each day more helpless. His collapse this afternoon she had taken for the end, and in her terror she had rushed out to find some aid; by the favor of the good God I was passing at the moment. They were not, as I must have realized, native to Belgium. They were Russian. Her father was a savant, and a philologist, an antiquarian at the head of the Czar's great museum in Petrograd. They had escaped here. And to go unnoticed she had assumed this peasant's dress; also, there must be a way to carry their supplies here from the markets, and so came the dog and cart.

And now disaster enveloped her!

Her great blue eyes filled, and her soft adorable voice became unsteady. They had no longer any money, and this affliction that had fallen so swiftly on her father left her with no one to whom she could go for counsel.

Could she trust me; would I be a friend to her? She must have some one to advise with; would I maintain her confidence?

There could have been no doubt of me. I would have given her my inheritance. I had far more in my letter of credit than I could need. I would draw it out at the bank to-morrow.

She only shook her heavenly head at me and put out her hands with a little gesture.

No, no, she could not take anything from me. She did not mean that; what she meant was would I be a friend to her? Would I respect her confidence? Could she trust me?

She stood up, released her hand that I had imprisoned in the fervor of my assurance, and removed the tea things from the table. She took them out and returned with some sheets of paper.

There must have been a dozen sheets, all blank except for some scrawling marks in pencil that looked like the pothooks made by school children in their first copy-books.

Her father had brought with him out of Russia a little packet containing a present from the Czar, she said. It was of great value and meant their fortune when their store of money was exhausted. He was fearful for the safety of the thing and had hidden it in Paris, somewhere in the house of the Prince Kitzenzof, their friend, with whom they had stopped after their escape from Russia. She had not thought much about it until this sudden paralysis had seized her father. Then he could not tell her where it was hidden. He was able to

speak when she first asked him, but she could not understand. He spoke either some ancient language or his words were babble. But he seemed to understand what she was saying, and to endeavor to reply.

Then, because he could still move his hands, it had occurred to her to have him write the secret, and she had put a pencil in his fingers and a pad of paper on his chair arm, and he had made these pothooks. Over and over again and always in the same strange fashion he had made the same strange marks.

As I have written, they looked to me like the first efforts of a child to form the curves and angles of letters in a copy-book. But the girl, beside me, pointed out some peculiar details.

The paralytic had made always precisely the same number of these marks on every sheet that had been put before him; there were always *five* of these marks; they were always precisely the same with no variation, and they were always in precisely the same relative position to one another. There was always a line drawn under them across the page, and below this line at about the middle of it there was an "x."

The girl had thought the thing all out and her comments were intelligent; in her simple way she had followed the very methods of learned men

who undertake to decipher an inscription. She gave her conclusion:

The marks were not unmeaning scrawls, because they never varied in form; the mere incoherent efforts of a paralytic to form letters would not have this exactness. Therefore she concluded that each of these marks meant something definite.

Then these characters were always placed in the same order and on a line; therefore they were related in that order in their meaning—if they had a meaning. Her father had always apparently understood her question to him, and seemed concerned to give her a direction. The "x" under the line, the point of his pencil always dwelt on, and returned to, as though he wished her particularly to mark it; as though it, in the whole writing, was the important sign.

Her deep interest might, indeed, influence her conclusions, but she thought that these characters contained a definite direction about the packet, and that the "x" indicated the point at which it was concealed, in some relation to the message above the line in this mysterious cipher. She thought that if she could understand these strange marks she would be told where the thing was that she sought, and how to find it.

But she could not understand them.

They did not resemble any letters of any alphabet with which she was familiar. True, she knew

only such modern languages as a girl was taught in Petrograd—French, Italian, English, and her native one. But her father was a great philologist. He would know innumerable languages. Could it be that he had written here in some one of the old dead languages to which his life had been given up? He was always deciphering inscriptions in these dead dialects at the Czar's museum.

She had thought about it.

Might it happen that this paralysis had left some portion of his mind uninjured—some portion dealing with old things—and benumbed the rest?

I caught at the suggestion: why, yes, that was a thing we had been taught in lectures. It was called *aphasia,* and there were many cases; men stricken with it forgot their names and history and their language, and had to learn to write again like a child; there was a case of one who could write only in the Greek script after he was so stricken, and another who knew only Latin.

"The thing is simple," I said. "We require only a direction to some archeologist. I will ask Monsieur Jonquelle."

"Oh, no, no!" she cried, "not Monsieur Jonquelle, not the police!"

That would ruin everything. The police would find the thing and keep it. It would be seized and confiscated. It had been carried into France con-

cealed. There had been no declaration at the customs. Monsieur Jonquelle was the very last person who should know.

Let her think a moment! And she walked about in her perturbation, her face tense, her fingers moving.

"I know," she said, "the very thing to do . . . the very thing!"

There was a book shop on the street where I had found her with the dog, a dingy place with a clutter of old books. And now that she remembered there was a big English book with a leather back; a sort of lexicon, she thought, that had a lot of ancient alphabets grouped in columns on one page. I might go in there and see if these strange marks resembled the letters of any alphabet.

I would know the very page. One day, when her father was poring over it, she had put her thumb on the margin; it was soiled with the dust of the shop and left a print. I would be able to see that very mark there.

She was now alive and vital with an eager interest. And she literally put me out of the cottage into the road. I must go now at once.

I set out for Ostend as upon some high adventure.

As I approached the village a tall man seated on a stone by the roadside got up and went on before me. I thought for a moment it was Mon-

sieur Jonquelle; then I saw the peasant dress he wore. I tried to overtake him, but his stride was as long and as vigorous as my own and he kept his distance. He was still before me when I went into the book shop on the street in Ostend.

I found the book at once.

It was a copy of Webster's Unabridged Dictionary in some old edition. And a moment later I had the very page, headed: Ancient Alphabets: Comparative Table of Hieroglyphic and Alphabetic Characters. And on the margin was the little thumb print! These ancient alphabets were arranged in columns, as the girl had said, with the equivalent English letter in the last narrow column on the right.

For a little while I was confused by the mass of outlandish characters. Then suddenly, in the third column from the left, I saw a mark like one of those on the sheet of paper that I had brought with me, and unfolded here for a comparison. I ran up the column and found another and another—the whole five. They were characters of the Phœnician alphabet. There could be no doubt about them. They were here precisely as the paralytic had drawn them on his sheet of paper. I wrote down the equivalent English letter below each hieroglyphic.

And they spelled the word L I G H T !

I put the paper into my pocket, tipped the shop-

keeper, and went to my dinner at the Maison Blanc. He gave me a sly wink as I departed:

"It is a cipher of the heart perhaps, that page. Mademoiselle comes, and then Monsieur!"

I found Monsieur Jonquelle at dinner. He talked without waiting for replies. Did I find adventures—distressed damsels and a quest of fleece? And could I bear it to remain a little? He must go back to Brussels. And then he spoke a word or two about my great-aunt, whom I was near forgetting. Long ago she had loved a Russian, a grand duke. He had been killed in a duel at Nice. But he had given her, for he was incredibly rich, a wonderful *gage d'amour,* that in the end had caused her death.

He rose, made me a rather pretentious genuflection, and went out.

I took it for a marked favor of heaven; for I was burning to get back with my report. . . .

It was scarcely dusk. I hired a motor to take me to the village, where I got down, dismissed it and went on afoot. I passed the tall peasant at his place beyond the village, but he strolled away into the field as I approached.

The girl ran to open the door for me, and stood back with her arm behind her as though to bow me in. I had the sense of having passed through a door in the hill into some witch's cottage of a fairy land.

Her big eyes grew wider in a sort of amazed, vague wonder when I put the paper down on the table and explained what I had discovered.

She nestled down beside me on the arm of the chair in which I sat, and seemed to fall into reflection, *light—light*. What could her father mean by that cryptic word? Then she spoke slowly, as though she thought aloud.

"A window in Russia is called a 'light.' "

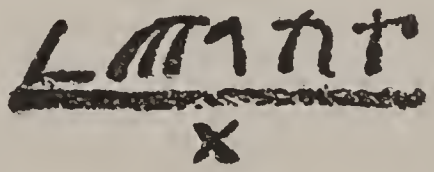
"Then he means a window," I said. "What window could he mean?"

She leaned forward until the mass of her straw-colored hair touched my face.

"It would be a window in Paris," she replied; "for the packet is hidden in Paris."

Then her voice caught vigor and went eagerly on:

"It would mean a window in the house on the Boulevard St. Germain, where we were living. . . . What window in that house? . . . Why, surely the window in my father's room there!"



She sprang up and whirled around the table like one of those exquisite spring-driven toys that the Swiss so excellently put together.

Why, of course, that was the reading of the riddle; the window in that room in that house in Paris.

Would I go to Paris in the morning and bring it to her?

I was not a suspect alien from that mad Russia all Europe feared. I would not be searched and registered, as she and her father had been searched and registered at every turning when their arrival in France was known; a matron at the Customs here had fingered every stitch of clothing on her, as though bombs from Moscow could be carried in the seam of a bodice.

The Prince's house was closed. He was now in England; for her father's health they had come here to the sea when their host departed. But I would have no difficulty. I could climb the wall if the gate was locked, a grating by the door could be lifted; the room was the first to the right on the first landing of the stairway; and there was only a single window in it. The house was 68 on the left hand as one faced down the Seine. I could not fail to find it.

Then she stopped, her face lifted.

But where, about the window, was it hidden? The query seemed only then to strike her.

And here I was able to add my quota of deduction. Was there not always a line drawn below

the word with that mystic cross mark? That would mean *below* the window; and was not the "x" always precisely under the center of this line? That would mean at the center under the window.

She whirled off again into the doll dance, as at the releasing of the spring that held her. And I stood up. Nothing in all the world could have been so alluring. The dainty wooden shoes, that one could have put into one's waistcoat pocket, were noiseless on the floor, and the little fairy figure turned smiling, its arms extended. It was all beyond the resistance of any mortal man. As she passed beside me I gathered her up into my arms. . . .

I traveled on the morning train to Paris.

I had not seen Monsieur Jonquelle, but he met me as I stepped down from my compartment. He was suave and with that bit of acid in his voice. He had expected me on an earlier train; and I must pardon his lack of leisure. To-morrow he would see me—perhaps a little before that. . . . He thought I might be toughened now to the depravity of Paris.

I was so bewildered at the man's appearing thus, with such knowledge of my acts, that to cover it I put the only query I could think of. Had he discovered my great-aunt's assassin?

He laughed. Her assassins he had known from

the very day. It was another thing that he was seeking to discover, and he had tethered out a kid to find it. . . . I had perhaps heard of that style of trapping cheetahs—to tether out a kid!

Then he made me a low, ironical, continental courtesy and walked away.

I followed precisely the girl's directions; took a motor to the Rue St. Père, dismissed it at that point and walked along the Boulevard St. Germain, until I found the house. Then I turned in behind it to a narrow street; a little way between two walls. The gate was not locked. I closed it behind me and crossed the garden to the door. To the right of this door was the old iron grating of which the fastenings had rusted out, and by which I could enter. But as I approached I noticed that this door was not quite closed. And so I pushed it open and went in.

I found the old marble stairway and ascended. The furniture in the house was covered. But it was evidently a splendid house; the house of some one old and rich. The friend of these exiles in Paris had been a grandee; but I thought, from his surroundings, of an effeminate and decadent taste. I found the room to the right at the first landing and went in. There before me was the single great window. The sun of the afternoon, filtered through the heavy curtains, made a sort of golden

twilight. And I paused for a moment, with my hand on the handle of the closed door.

The furnishings in this room were also covered. But I could see it was no man's apartment. It was the boudoir of a woman. It was mellow with age and in the refined taste of one long accustomed to the luxuries of life. The Russian who had received here the exiled savant and his daughter was a strange exotic thus to surround himself with this effeminacy.

But such reflections were of no concern.

I went over to the window. The casement board came up easily when I put the blade of my knife under it, and there, as though hastily thrust into concealment, was a necklace of great Oriental pearls.

I lifted it out and gathered it into my hands; it filled them—a fortune!

At this moment I heard a faint sound behind me. I turned, my fingers a mass of jewels.

Before the door, the heels of his boots together, stood Monsieur Jonquelle, his body in the act of that mocking genuflection.

"Ah, Monsieur!" he said, "how great a thing this love is! Blind and with the strength of Samson! It ejects the great-aunt out of life, and sends the nephew to the service of distressed damsels and paralyzed old men. But also it is blind! Hieroglyphics spelling out an English word for

the direction of a Russian lady does not seem queer to him; and doors unlatched for his convenience in the heart of Paris. . . . "

His voice was oiled with vitriol.

"But I felicitate Monsieur. He has made a perfect bait about our wolf trap for the cheetahs, and he finds the necklace that the *Service de la Sûreté* could get no track of. . . . It was this necklace, Monsieur, that we were seeking; its purloiners have been always in the hollow of our hand . . . and Monsieur finds it for us, here in his great-aunt's house!"

I stammered in my profound amazement.

"My great-aunt's house!"

"Why, *certainement!*" He continued in his acid voice: "And in the very room in which she died, when she awoke to find the cherished gift of her long dead lover vanished!"

I stammered on:

"You mean . . . you mean . . . the Russian savant and his daughter robbed her!"

He put out his hands with a great gesture of rejection.

"Ah, no! How blind this love is! . . . The robbery was accomplished by old Dutocq, who used to be a concierge in the wing of Archeology at the Louvre, and the American actress, Greysmith, called 'Dolly Deep Dimple' in the 'Review of Toy Land.' "

X.—*The Man with Steel Fingers*

THE great drawing-room through which Monsieur Jonquelle advanced was empty.

But it was not silent. A vague music, like some weird conception of Hoffman, seemed to feel about the room, extending itself—a thing that crept blindly and disturbed as though it would escape from something that followed it tirelessly and invisibly.

It required the fingers of a master, on the board of a keyed instrument, to produce these sounds. They came from the room beyond, a second drawing-room looking out on the Bois de Boulogne.

Monsieur Jonquelle had not allowed the servant to announce him.

"One is not permitted to disturb Lord Valleys at this hour," the servant had said.

Monsieur Jonquelle's card had added to the man's perplexity. One was also not permitted to deny an entrance, anywhere, at any hour, to the Prefect of Police of Paris. The man had made a hopeless gesture, like one resigning himself to the inevitable.

And so Monsieur Jonquelle had entered.

It was a beautiful house beyond the Arc de Triomphe, built by that extraordinary Brazilian who had married two princes, divorced them both, and gone elsewhere on her search for new sensations.

It was of pale rose-colored stone with a great court, a wide, circular stairway, and these exquisite drawing-rooms now empty but for the priceless furniture and this haunting music.

Monsieur Jonquelle, after the door had closed behind him, remained for some moments quite motionless in the eddy, as one might write it, of this strange, weird music, in which there was always a note of ruthless vigor—a note of barbaric vigor, harsh and determined.

Monsieur Jonquelle could not place the music in any remembered composition. It was not the work of any master that he knew. It was an improvisation of the fingers that produced it. And perhaps for that reason the Prefect of Police gave it close attention.

Presently he advanced into the room from which the music issued. He paused a moment in the doorway, watching the figure with white, nimble fingers hard as steel. Then he spoke.

"Your pardon, Monsieur," said the Prefect of Police, "I am desolated to disturb you."

The man at the piano sprang up and turned

swiftly as though his body accomplished the act with a single motion.

To the eye, the man was strange. His shoulders were very broad and stooped; his face was wide, massive—the face of a Slav. His hair was thick, close and heavy, but it was not long, and affected no mannerisms.

The man was very carefully dressed, after the English fashion, and with its well-bred restraint. But the impression he gave one was decidedly not English. It was that of a Slav adapted to an English aspect.

The eyes one did not see. One rarely saw them. They seemed to be hidden by heavy lids like curtained windows. And there was no expression in the face. The face was a mask. It seemed always in repose. The big nose, the square, brutal jaw, and the wide planes of the face were white as with a sort of pallor. Monsieur Jonquelle had a sudden, swift impression. The man before him was either the greatest criminal or the greatest genius that he had ever seen.

Jonquelle had also a further impression of failure. He had meant to startle this man, and observe what followed. And he had startled him; but untrue to every experience, there was nothing to observe. The man's face remained without an expression; he was behind it hidden from every eye. It was a mask that could not be changed by

the will of another. Monsieur Jonquelle wondered in what manner it would change at the will of the man that it so admirably obscured. It was a thing he was not interested to discover.

It was only for an instant that the man was without expression. Then he smiled and came forward into the room. The smile began with a queer lifting of the lip and extended vaguely with but a slight changing of the man's features.

His voice, when he spoke, was low, well modulated and composed. His manner was easy and gracious.

"Ah!" he said, "it is Monsieur Jonquelle, the Prefect of Police of Paris. I am honored."

He placed a great chair by the window. It was a carved, heavy chair upholstered in a superb tapestry, a chair that servants did not move in a drawing-room. But Lord Valleys placed it by the window easily, as though its immense weight were nothing to him.

He indicated the chair with a gesture and withdrew to another beyond the window—a little beyond the light of it, beside a curtain.

Monsieur Jonquelle removed his gloves; he sat a moment twisting them in his fingers like one in a certain embarrassment. His host, also seated, regarded him with the vague smile which appeared now as a sort of background on the mask of his face. The Prefect of Police hesitated.

"Monsieur," he said, "I have called upon you for an opinion upon a problem which has always perplexed me. It is a problem upon which the opinions of persons without experience are wholly without value, and unfortunately, all those who have had experience and were, therefore, able to give me an opinion, have been always persons lacking in a certain element of intelligence. I have not had the opinion of a man of intelligence, who was also a man of experience, upon this problem."

He paused. The man before him did not reply. He waited as in a profound courtesy for Monsieur Jonquelle to complete the subject with which he had opened his discourse. He had taken a small chair, and he sat in it as a man of great strength and vigor and of an unusual bulk rests his weight upon something which he is uncertain will support it. He did not move, but the expression in his face changed slightly. His eyebrows lifted as in a courteous inquiry. Monsieur Jonquelle went on. He seemed not entirely at ease.

"I shall not pretend an ignorance of your affairs, Monsieur. The law courts of England are brutal and direct. They have no consideration for any one, and the press of those islands has a less restraint. When one is charged with a crime in England, and comes into its courts, no humiliation is neglected. That one is innocent, means nothing; that this innocence is presently demon-

strated does not preserve one, in the events preceding such a verdict, from every imaginable humiliation."

Monsieur Jonquelle continued to hesitate. But he went on.

"Monsieur," he said, "out of this unfortunate experience you will have come, I feel, with a certain opinion upon the problem which disturbs me. And I am sure, Monsieur, you will not deny me the benefit of that opinion."

The Prefect of Police looked up like one who with hesitation requests a favor from another.

Lord Valleys replied immediately.

"I shall be very glad to give you my opinion upon any point in the matter," he said. "Surely I have been spared little. I have had every experience of humiliation. The criminal law of England is a bungling and cruel device. Those who find themselves concerned with it, I profoundly pity. There is no consideration of family or culture that in any way mitigates its severity or in any direction preserves one from odium, once the machinery of a criminal court of England is on its way. The experience of it is a horror to me, Monsieur; but if it can result in any benefit to you or to another, I am willing to recall it. What is the problem, Monsieur, upon which you would have my opinion?"

"It is this, Monsieur," replied the Prefect of

Police. "Is it your conclusion, upon this experience of life, that there is a Providence of God that undertakes to adjust the affairs of mankind—to assist the helpless and to acquit the innocent—or do you believe that it is the intelligence of man that accomplishes this result? . . . What is it, Monsieur, that moves behind the machinery of the world—chance, luck, fortune or some sort of Providence?"

Lord Valleys seemed to reflect while the Prefect of Police was speaking, and he now replied with no hesitation.

"Chance, Monsieur," he said, "is unquestionably the greatest and most mysterious factor in all human affairs, but it is modified and diverted by the human will. . . . Human intelligence, Monsieur, and chance are the two factors."

The Prefect of Police continued to look down at his hands.

"I have been of a different opinion, Lord Valleys," he said. "I think there is an intention behind events, a sort of will to justice, to righteousness, as one has said. It is not chance as we usually define the word, and the human will cannot circumvent it. . . . It is strange, as I see it, Lord Valleys. This thing we call human intelligence seems to be able to aid, to assist, to advance the vague, immense, persistent impulse behind events, and

to delay and to disturb it, but not ultimately to defeat it.

"Take the extraordinary events that have happened to you, Lord Valleys, and tell me, if you can, how they could have arrived by chance!

"Your uncle, Lord Winton, took the title and the whole properties of your family by the accident of birth. Your father, the second son, having no title and no fortune, entered the diplomatic service and was allotted to one of the little courts of southeastern Europe. He married your mother there, and you were born and grew up in the atmosphere of Serbia. There was little chance that you would ever have this fortune or title. Lord Winton had two sons; one of them married an American; the other remained unmarried. There were three lives between you and this title and its immense estates in England. . . . What chance was there, Monsieur, that these persons would be removed and these benefits descend to you?"

He paused.

"But they were removed, Monsieur, and the benefits have descended. The war appeared. Both sons of Lord Winton lost their lives in it; Lord Winton is himself murdered; and you come, Monsieur, from a paupered kingdom of southeastern Europe to be a peer of England with an immense estate. Even the American grand-

daughter of Lord Winton takes nothing under this extraordinary English law of entail. Would you call this chance, Monsieur?"

Lord Valleys found no difficulty at all with the inquiry. He replied directly.

"Monsieur," he said, "it was all clearly chance except the murder of Lord Winton. That was, of course, design—a design which the wise English authorities attributed to me, and which they spared no effort to fix upon me. That they were unable to do so is not, I think, attributable to this thing which you call Providence. It is attributable rather, I think, to the intelligence of my legal counsel and to myself."

He looked directly at Monsieur Jonquelle. His big, placid face lifted; his voice was even and unhurried.

"I am not embarrassed to discuss it, Monsieur," he continued. "When the war had ended with the death of Lord Winton's sons, I was, by virtue of what you have so aptly called 'the accident of birth,' next in succession to the title. I thought it both advisable and courteous to present myself to Lord Winton, and I went to England for that purpose.

"Lord Winton was an eccentric person. As he grew older, and after the death of his sons, his eccentricity became more dominant. I did not find him on his estates at Ravenscroft; he was at

this time in London in a little old house which the family has always owned in a street toward Covent Garden.

"On the night that I called to see Lord Winton, it was quite late. I found him alone in the house. He seemed disturbed to see me, but he was courteous, and I cannot complain of his welcome. He seemed, however, not to realize that I had grown into a man. He seemed to regard me as a queer, foreign lad to whom he owed some obligation of hospitality."

Lord Valleys stopped. He leaned a little forward in the chair, and his voice took on a firmer note.

"Monsieur," he said, "I am saying to you now a thing to which I testified at the English trial, and which was not believed. Lord Winton told me that he expected a person to call on him within a very few minutes and to remain for perhaps an hour. He asked me to return at the end of an hour. I got up to go. As I went down the stairway, a motor, entering the street from the direction of the City, stopped before the door. The door was closed but the sound was clearly audible.

"Lord Winton, who was behind me, also came down the steps. On a console in the hall were several candles which the servants, according to custom, had placed there. An idea came to Lord

Winton, for he stopped me as my hand was on the door to go out. He took up one of these candles in a tall brass candlestick, and touching me on the arm, handed it to me.

"'Instead of going out,' he said, 'suppose you go down into the wine cellar. There should be some bottles of Burgundy of a famous year stored there by your grandfather. See if you can find them, and we shall have a glass of wine with our talk. I have a great deal to say to you, my nephew. The wine will sustain us.'

"You will see, Monsieur, that this idea that I was merely a grown-up lad, come to visit an ancient relative, was quite fixed with Lord Winton. As the servants had gone out, he was sending me, as though I were a lad from Eton, to find the wine for our conversation. He gave me the key, a direction about the steps and doors. He even said there was a box of biscuit on the dining room table which I should bring up. It was all, you see, Monsieur, quite as though I were an under-graduate from some English public school."

The man looked down at his firm, placid hands resting upon and obscuring the arms of the chair in which he sat.

"This, Monsieur," he said, "is a portion of my evidence which the English criminal court refused to believe. It was incredibly stupid!"

Monsieur Jonquelle looked up sharply at that sentence.

"The English criminal court," he said, "was even more stupid than you imagine. It was, as you have said, 'incredibly stupid.' "

Lord Valleys made no comment.

"There was only my word for the statement," he said. "I could not prove it, and yet it was the truth."

The man was startled by Monsieur Jonquelle's reply. One knew that, although one would have been troubled to describe the evidence.

"It is precisely the truth," said Monsieur Jonquelle.

Lord Valleys looked steadily at the Prefect for a moment before he spoke.

"I regret, Monsieur," he said, "that you were not present in that English court."

The man looked down again at his wonderful hands, steel strong, and as supple as silk; then he went on:

"It happened, however, that this chance, which you question in human affairs, came to my aid. One of the Metropolitan police on duty on this night in the neighborhood of Covent Garden saw a motor drive away from Lord Winton's door. The time, as nearly as could be fixed, corresponded with the hour which I had indicated in my testimony. And for the first time in the

course of the criminal trial, the case for the Crown was shaken. Neither my solicitors nor the Crown were able to discover anything further. The driver of the motor could not be located, and the one who called that night upon Lord Winton remained a mystery."

Lord Valleys continued to speak deliberately and without emotion.

"I do not know who this person, with whom Lord Winton had a midnight appointment, could have been, and I do not know what occurred at that mysterious conference, except, of course, the resultant tragedy, which was afterwards known to every one.

"I took the candle which Lord Winton gave me and went along the hall to the stairway, which descended into the basement of the house. I had in my hand the key to the wine cellar.

"The last I saw of Lord Winton in his life was his tall, bowed back as he stooped to open the door, his hand on the latch. He seemed a sort of heavy shadow outlined against the door in the dim light of the gas jet that burned feebly, lighting the hall behind him."

He made a vague gesture, lifting one of his hands softly from the arm of the chair.

"Here, Monsieur, chance or my intelligence failed me. If I had remained a moment—if, in fact, I had looked back as I went down the stair-

way at the end of the hall, I should have seen Lord Winton's assassin."

The Prefect of Police made no comment, and Lord Valleys continued:

"After some little difficulty, I finally found the door to the wine cellar, opened it and entered. It was very old—one of those huge stone cells which the early English built in their houses in which to store the choice wines of France.

"It seemed to me that this wine cellar had not been entered in a long time. I was mistaken in this impression. Fortunately for me, it had, from time to time, been looked into by Lord Winton's manservant. I have said 'fortunately,' because this manservant, Staley, was able to confirm my statement.

"The whole of the low vault was cluttered with straw, piled and heaped with it, like a farmer's rick. It was this aspect of the place that gave me the impression that it had not been entered for a long time. And it was true that it had not been disturbed for a long time. The walls and the floor of this cellar were stone; the ceiling was of wood crossed with beams dried out like tinder, and the bins, as I have said, were heaped with the straw in which innumerable wine cases had been packed.

"Lord Winton had described the wine which he wished so that I could not mistake it. But he was

not certain in which bin it was to be found, and I had to make a search of very nearly the whole of the cellar. This did not disturb me, for Lord Winton had fixed an hour as the length of the visit of the person whom he expected, and who, in fact, had arrived. And I was not to return until that time. It was, as nearly as I can determine, about eleven o'clock of the night when I went down the steps to the wine cellar."

The man remained silent a moment as if in some contemplation. Finally he continued:

"An unfortunate accident occurred. In rising from a bin over which I had been stooped, the candle touched a wisp of straw hanging from above, and immediately the dried-out, half-rotten wood of the beamed ceiling flashed into flame."

He paused again.

"I was appalled, but I did not lose my sense of necessity. I undertook to put the fire out. I made a desperate effort against it, there in that underground cell, for I knew the house must burn if this whole wood ceiling took fire. The place filled with smoke. It became very nearly impossible to breathe, but I did not give up the fight against the fire. Finally when I was blinded, choked and very nearly unconscious, I broke open the door leading from the basement of the house and ran out into the street. It seemed that I should never breathe, and I continued to run.

"You know what followed. I was taken up by one of the Metropolitan police; the burning house was entered, and Lord Winton brought out. He was dead! The small blade of a knife had been driven into his body low down on the right side. The wound, ranging upward, was deep. It had severed a vital artery."

Lord Valleys got up. He did it softly and apparently without any effort, as one merely changes his position in a chair. He had been seated, and instantly he was standing. He had the aspect of one intending to accomplish some act in the room, but pausing to complete his story before he went forward.

"It was to be expected, Monsieur, that the English court under these circumstances would try me for the murder of Lord Winton. I had both the motive and the opportunity to accomplish it, and the circumstances were, to say the least, indicative. And I should have been convicted for that murder but for two directions in which chance helped me, and a third in which the intelligence of my legal counsel was able to establish my innocence beyond any question.

"To my surprise, this manservant, Staley, came forward to establish the fact that the wine cellar was little less than a straw rick, and this Metropolitan police officer appeared to say that he had seen the motor leaving Lord Winton's door

shortly before the fire was discovered. These facts indicated the truth of my statement.

"A further fact brought out by my legal advisers established with mathematical accuracy the fact that I had not dealt Lord Winton the blow that ejected him out of life. The wound which had caused his death had been made with the small blade of a knife. The police found in my pocket a knife with a small blade, a blade of about the width of the wound. No evidence of blood was found on this knife, but the police professed to believe that it had been carefully washed. They thought traces of moisture remained on it. The case seemed convincing. I myself realized its gravity, and but for one fact a conviction might have followed. The autopsy showed that the wound which had caused the death of Lord Winton was seven inches deep. The handle of the knife with which it had been accomplished had not entered the wound. The wound was no larger than the width of the small knife blade at its exterior point."

Lord Valleys suddenly extended his hand, like one who puts down something that is finished.

"It therefore followed, Monsieur, with mathematical accuracy that no verbal conjecture could ever obscure, that the knife blade with which this wound had been accomplished was at least seven inches in length. The knife blade found on my

person by the Metropolitan police was only four inches in length. It was, therefore, certain, as certain as only a mathematical calculation can be certain, that Lord Winton was not killed with the knife which I carried.

"And I was therefore acquitted. . . . You know, Monsieur, what the English law courts say: 'A man may lie, but circumstances cannot.' I may have lied, and Lord Winton's manservant and the Metropolitan police who saw the motor drive away on that night; but the science of mathematics could not lie. A wound seven inches deep could not be made with a knife-blade four inches long. And the case ended."

He went over to a table, got a tortoise shell box delicately inlaid with silver, opened it and presented it to Monsieur Jonquelle.

"You will have a cigarette, Monsieur?" he said.

It is also possible that he wished to see what it was that Monsieur Jonquelle observed on the opposite side of the street. For some time he had occasionally looked that way. Nothing was to be observed there—women, children passed Two young men, elegantly dressed, coming up on either side, had stopped and were engaged in some animated discourse.

Monsieur Jonquelle took the cigarette, and Lord Valleys went back to the chair.

"Monsieur," said the Prefect of Police, "do

you have any idea who this mysterious assassin of Lord Winton was?"

"I do not," replied Lord Valleys. "There was much conjecture at the trial, but it was all wholly conjecture. It must, however, have been some powerful person, because the assassin must have held Lord Winton with one hand and driven in the knife with the other. The experts pretended to find evidence of bruised places, as from a powerful hand."

Then suddenly, as out of some inciting memory, the man's voice changed.

"A moment ago, Monsieur, when I mentioned the arrival of the visitor at Lord Winton's house, and the doubt of the English court of that fact, you said it was true. How do you know that it was true, if I may be permitted to inquire?"

The Prefect of Police balanced the cigarette a moment in his fingers before he replied.

"I know your statement about the motor is true, Monsieur, because I know who it was that came to Lord Winton on that night. And, Monsieur, it is on behalf of this person that I have come to you to-day."

Lord Valleys was astonished, but he did not move, and his expression did not change.

"You amaze me," he said. "Upon what mission from this mysterious person could you come to me?"

"Upon the same mission," replied the Prefect of Police, "with which that person went on the fatal night to Lord Winton's house in Covent Garden. Lord Winton promised to do a certain thing for this, as you call it, 'mysterious person.' He died before it could be carried out, and I have now come to you to fulfill it. I trust, Monsieur, that you will not deny me."

Lord Valleys' astonishment was now profound, but he continued to give no evidence of it. His voice remained low and conventional.

"Monsieur," he said, "this suggestion seems preposterous. Why should I carry out something which Lord Winton promised, and why should you come to me from his assassin?"

"I do not come to you from his assassin," replied Monsieur Jonquelle, "but I do come to you to carry out what he promised. As you have taken the properties and the title of Lord Winton, you should assume, also, his obligations."

Monsieur Jonquelle rose. He took a folded, legal paper out of his pocket and presented it to Lord Valleys.

"Monsieur," he said, "Lord Winton promised to execute this indenture. He died before his signature could be attached to it. I must ask you to execute it in his stead."

Suddenly, as once before on this morning, Lord Valleys, who had been seated the instant before,

was now, with no motion that seemed visible to the eye, standing on his feet. He came forward, took the paper which Monsieur Jonquelle held in his hand, and going over to the table, unfolded it and stooped over it. He was some time in an inspection of the document, and in the meantime Monsieur Jonquelle had made a gesture, as of one flicking the ashes from a cigarette through the open window into the Bois de Boulogne. The two young men in their animated discussion instantly crossed the street and entered the house.

Presently Lord Valleys rose from his stooped posture. He was shaken with astonishment, but there was of this astonishment no visible element, either in his appearance or in his voice.

"Monsieur," he said, "this is a deed drawn by an English solicitor, conveying all of Lord Winton's estates in England to his granddaughter, Barbara Westridge. Why, Monsieur, should I convey these estates to this American girl? They have descended to me by inheritance. One does not alienate his lands without a cause."

"I will suggest a reason," replied Monsieur Jonquelle. "This is in accordance with Lord Winton's promise. You stand now in Lord Winton's stead, and as I have said, you have received his benefits, and you should assume his obligations."

Lord Valleys looked at the Prefect of Police.

"You do not suggest a legal obligation, I imagine."

"I do not," replied Monsieur Jonquelle. "But I suggest that the moral reason is compelling, and you will not deny me!"

Lord Valleys smiled—that vague smile which seemed not to disturb the features of his face. He folded the deed together in his hand.

"You must permit me to decline, Monsieur," he said.

He paused a moment, and the background of his face hardened.

"And you must overlook it, Monsieur," he said, "if I feel that your whole suggestion with respect to this matter is not convincing. This girl could not have assassinated Lord Winton."

"She could not," replied Monsieur Jonquelle. "Lord Winton was killed by some powerful assassin who seized him, compressed his body and drove in the knife."

He turned now toward Lord Valleys, his face firm.

"Monsieur," he said, "will you carry out the obligation of Lord Winton and leave the matter of his assassin a mystery, or will you refuse it and have that mystery solved?"

The man at the table looked strangely at Monsieur Jonquelle. He had the aspect of a creature of great strength, concerned always with conceal-

ing it. He was puzzled and disturbed, but his voice did not change.

"You know, then, the assassin of Lord Winton?"

"I do," replied the Prefect. "Shall I name him to you?"

The man made again the vague gesture with his white, steel fingers.

"You may keep the secret of the name, Monsieur," he said, "if you will be kind enough to tell me the thing that indicated to you the name."

"With pleasure," replied Monsieur Jonquelle. "You have said that the English criminal courts are stupid, and I have concurred in that opinion. Observe, Monsieur, the evidence of that stupidity. This criminal court could not understand how a knife blade four inches long could inflict a direct wound seven inches deep. They measured the knife blade and the wound, these English, and wrote it down impossible. . . . But you, Monsieur, who are Slav, and I who am Latin, would hardly arrive at this conclusion. For we would reflect that a knife blade four inches long, driven into the soft tissues of the body compressed together by the impact of a powerful blow might easily leave a wound measuring seven inches in length behind it—when that compression was released and the tissues relaxed. It is a fact, Mon-

sieur, that the *Service de la Sûreté* has frequently demonstrated."

The man at the table was motionless, as in some indecision. He did not change. He remained only in a sort of dreadful immobility, and he seemed in this immobility to consider some desperate hazard. He was awakened by the two young men from the Bois de Boulogne, who now entered the drawing-room.

"Monsieur," said the voice of the Prefect of Police, "I feared that I might not be your equal in all directions, and I have asked these two agents of the Service to come up. They will also be useful as witnesses to the indenture."

Lord Valleys made no reply. He opened a drawer of the table, took out a pen and attached his signature to the deed—waited until the witnesses had signed it, blotted it carefully and folding it together, handed it to the Prefect of Police.

"I purchase immunity," he said, "from a second trial before the English criminal court!"

Monsieur Jonquelle received the indenture and put it into his pocket. He took up his gloves, his hat, his stick; then he smiled.

"You purchased, Monsieur," he said, "a thing that you already possess. It is the law of England that one who has been acquitted of a crime cannot again be tried in her courts for it!"

XI.—*The Mottled Butterfly*

THE opera had opened. The music began to fill the corridors. But Monsieur Jonquelle did not go in.

He remained idling in the foyer, a cigarette in his fingers, his manner and air a well-bred, bored indifference. The whole house was crowded. There was not a vacant seat.

It was the last performance in Paris of Madame Zirtenzoff's *Salome.*

A few belated persons passed Monsieur Jonquelle and entered the doors to the boxes. Some of these persons addressed him; all regarded him. He was a well-known figure in Paris. His friendship was worth something, and whether one knew him, or cared to know him, all were curious about the man.

The vast music assembled and extended itself.

The foyer became empty, and still Monsieur Jonquelle did not go in. Perhaps it was because Madame Zirtenzoff had not gone on. She was a famous beauty; her *Salome* had the abandon which stimulated even the jaded nerves of France.

It had been on at the Opera for fifty days, and Paris was still keen to see it.

The woman was a Russian exotic, one of those alluring creatures that always assemble a fabulous legend. There was a wild passion in her *Salome,* and her conquests were the gossip of Paris.

The opera had continued for perhaps thirty minutes. Madame Zirtenzoff had come on; her voice, like a silver bell, reached Monsieur Jonquelle clearly where he sauntered in the foyer.

Presently the door to a box opened and one of the pages of the theater appeared with an immense bouquet of orchids. The flowers were worth a thousand francs. They could have been grown in Paris only with extreme care and under every perfection of light and temperature. It was a mass of flowers that would have drawn the attention of anybody, exquisite orchids of the genus *Oncidium Kramerii,* called the Mottled Butterfly.

It seemed to have drawn the attention of Monsieur Jonquelle. He stopped the page as he passed him.

"*Garçon,*" he said, handing him a piece of gold, "find me a box of cigarettes before you go on with those flowers. Quickly—run; I will hold them until you return."

The boy knew the great chief of the *Service de la Sûreté.* For a moment he was uncertain

what to do; he had been sent to deliver these flowers to Madame Zirtenzoff. There was a generous gratuity behind the direction, but it was not more than Monsieur Jonquelle's gold-piece, and besides, one does not disobey the Prefect of Police of Paris.

He gave Monsieur Jonquelle the bouquet of orchids and disappeared down the stairway. He was gone hardly a moment; when he returned, Monsieur Jonquelle had not moved from his position by a pillar of the foyer. He handed back the orchids to the page and received the box of cigarettes.

He paused a moment, fingered the box but did not open it; instead he walked a few steps down the foyer and entered the box from which the page had come out with the orchids.

One looking on would have wondered why the Prefect of Police required a pack of cigarettes, at the cost of a ten-franc gold-piece—especially as, after having turned it in his hand, he had put it carelessly into his pocket and entered a box.

It would appear that he waited for these cigarettes before entering the box. But to what end? One could not smoke in a box at the Opera, at its most expensive point in the ultrafashionable audience of Paris. Although the great opera house was packed with people,—not a vacant seat visible

to the eye,—there was but one person in the box which Monsieur Jonquelle entered.

He was a person that any one would pause almost anywhere to observe. He was young; he was exquisitely dressed—a dress in which there was some of the over-extravagance of detail, that suggestion of elegance, which the Parisian cannot avoid. The severity of the English tailor he must always modify; he must be permitted to add a jewel, a bracelet—some feminine touch.

He was a young man and extremely handsome, a blond French type with a dainty mustache and regular Italian features, and thick, soft, yellow hair presenting the gloss of the seal's coat. In his physical aspect, for perfection of detail, the man had no equal on the Paris boulevards.

It had got him a rich American wife and lifted him, as by a fairy lamp, out of the sordid environments of an old family in decay. The thing seemed a piece of the design of a Providence with an esthetic sense.

This exquisite person would have been incongruous except in an atmosphere of wealth. He had an apartment now beyond the Arc de Triomphe, one of those wonderful apartments that the American invasion after the Great War had set up in Paris.

The Marquis was the envy of the boulevardier.

But it was rumored that he had not the free-

dom of his wife's money-sacks. He got what she allowed him, but it ought to be written here, in justice to the Marquis, that it was not he who complained. Why should he? The allowance was evidently enough for any reasonable man. He had the best of everything; if he felt any sense of stint, there was no sign either by word or act.

In form the Marquis was above reproach. There could be no surprise to the fashionable audience of Paris in the fact that the Marquis was alone in the box. His wife was on a visit to America, and it was better fitting that the Marquis should be alone than to be with another who might console him for his wife's absence. If the Marquis was not the best of men, he was at any rate not the least discreet.

He rose and bowed when the Prefect entered.

"Ah, Monsieur," he said, "I am charmed to see you; Madame Zirtenzoff will be worth even an hour of the priceless time of the Prefect of Paris. . . . I shall be honored to have you as guest; pray sit down."

Monsieur Jonquelle sat down. He looked a moment over the vast audience, brilliant and distinguished; a moment at Madame Zirtenzoff on the distant stage; and then he addressed his host.

"Monsieur," he said, "Madame Zirtenzoff is, I imagine, beyond rubies. But I have not come here to observe her; I have come to ask you about

the robbery in your apartment. That was an extraordinary robbery."

"It was most extraordinary, Monsieur," replied the Marquis. "The whole of Paris regretted that you were out of France at the time. Where were you, Monsieur?"

Then the Marquis added with a laugh:

"You cannot be expected to tell that; you protect us, Monsieur, by your mystery. If the Lecca could say, 'To-morrow Monsieur Jonquelle will be in Brussels,' we should not have a jewel or a five-franc piece remaining to us."

"Alas, Monsieur," replied the Prefect, "you do me too much honor; there are a number of very good men with the *Service de la Sûreté,* quite as capable as I to protect Paris."

The Marquis laughed.

"You have an affection for your associates, Monsieur Jonquelle, that I fear clouds your intelligence. Nothing could have been managed with more stupidity than the investigation of my apartment. In your absence, Monsieur, you cannot imagine into what hopeless commonplace the investigation of a criminal affair in Paris can descend.

"Alas, Monsieur, there is a gulf fixed between Alexander and the lieutenants of Alexander! But for my own feeble efforts, nothing would have resulted from the police investigation in my apart-

ment. The necklace of diamonds which the Marquise purchased for five hundred thousand francs —assembled from the crown jewels of Russia— would have disappeared without a clew to the thief. As it happened, he was brought to justice; he confessed and was sentenced for an incredible period by the court. But for me"—and again the Marquis laughed—"there would have been no thief sentenced. . . . Your inspectors, Monsieur, were ridiculous."

There was humility in the Prefect's reply.

"And the Marquis Chantelle was magnificent! His fame in the affair has reached me; he is the admiration of the *Sûreté!* I have come, Monsieur, to verify the details, and from yourself. I do not know what rumor may have added or omitted."

He bowed slightly, like one who would add a gesture of compliment to his words.

"Willingly, Monsieur," replied the Marquis. "I shall be charmed to verify details; but you will pardon me if I am moved to ask you for your opinion on a certain phase of this mystery. You must have an opinion, Monsieur, if you do not have an explanation, in fact."

He turned a little in his seat.

"Monsieur," he said, "how did it happen that when we had fixed this robbery upon Jean Lequex, a member of the Lecca, he admitted it before the

court, and asked for an immediate sentence? But he would admit nothing else; he would not say what he had done with the necklace or where it was?

"That was a strange position for a man to take, Monsieur. He could hope nothing from the judge. Why confess? It did not lighten his sentence; and after all, our evidence against him was circumstantial. Why did he not say what he had done with the necklace? The judge would have reduced the sentence. Why conceal it, Monsieur, and go for this long period of servitude? Did he hope to escape?"

Monsieur Jonquelle spoke with decision.

"He did not."

"Then, Monsieur," continued the Marquis, "why did he refuse to say where the necklace was? Of what service would be the necklace to him after twenty years?"

Again Monsieur Jonquelle replied directly and with decision.

"Of no use, Monsieur; the man did not expect it to be of any use to him."

"Then, Monsieur," continued the Marquis, "why in the name of heaven did he not say where this necklace was, and thereby reduce his sentence?"

Monsieur Jonquelle seemed to reflect.

"You have asked for my opinion," he said;

"I think I can do better than give an opinion. I think I can tell you precisely the reason why Jean Lequex, when he confessed this crime before the court, refused to say what had become of the necklace."

He smiled.

"But I must be permitted, Monsieur, to hold this explanation as a sort of wage against the details of your story. The *Service de la Sûreté* is filled with admiration for you; you must omit no item of the narrative. . . . Ah, how enchanting Madame Zirtenzoff is! Hair like a sunburst of dreams, and the figure of a dryad! One would do murder for her."

The Marquis laughed.

"Murder, Monsieur?"

"Ah, yes," replied the Prefect, "murder or any lesser crime."

The Marquis looked the Prefect frankly in the face.

"You believe this robbery was committed for a woman?"

"Could jewels be intended for any other?" replied Jonquelle.

The Marquis continued to regard the Prefect with a certain interest.

"You mean," he said, "that the reason why the Apache, Jean Lequex, did not tell what he had

done with the necklace was, in fact, because he had given it to a woman?"

The Prefect of Police looked at the Marquis with some concern, with, in fact, a certain element of wonder.

"Why, no, Monsieur, that is not the reason at all."

The Marquis seemed puzzled.

"Do you generalize, then, to no definite purpose?"

"By no means," replied the Prefect of Police. "I would generalize to the solution of this mystery; and with Monsieur the Marquis' aid, I think we can arrive at it."

"Monsieur," replied the Marquis coldly, "I believe the mystery has already been concluded; I believe its solution seems complete."

" 'Seems,' " repeated the Prefect of Police, "is the word precisely. While it is true that the criminal, Jean Lequex, has confessed before the court and been sentenced to a term of years for the robbery of these jewels, the jewels remain to be discovered."

He paused and regarded the Marquis with an expression of compliment.

"We feel, at the *Service de la Sûreté,* that if we could bring to the remaining feature of this matter the same degree of excellent acumen that was brought to its initial stages, by the Marquis

de Chantelle, we should be able to restore the necklace to the Marquise upon her return from America. She returns to-morrow, does she not? It seems a brief time for so difficult an undertaking."

Monsieur Jonquelle smiled.

"I regret to intrude upon your pleasure, Marquis, and especially on this, the final night of Madame Zirtenzoff's triumph—amazing woman, adorable woman! One should lose no moment of her excellence."

He paused.

"But Monsieur, I cannot adequately admire your excellent handling of this matter unless I am quite certain that I have the details of it correctly. Permit me, Monsieur, to repeat these details, and correct me, I beg of you, if I should present them with an item of inaccuracy. I was absent and I have only the memory of inferiors."

The Prefect of Police rested his arm on the seat of the box, while the Marquis fingered his monocle idly, twisting the silk cord. He assumed an attitude of careless attention, and Monsieur Jonquelle went on:

"On the night of the eighteenth of February, Monsieur le Marquis, opening the door of his apartment at a late hour, saw a slip of paper beside the door. At the moment the Marquis gave this item no attention; it did not impress him. It was

late, the servants having retired, and the Marquis withdrew to his bedroom alone. It appears, however, that digressions of the mind occur to all of us, even to the Marquise de Chantelle, on the border of dreamland. It occurred to him that this slip of paper was a memorandum by the concierge to call the attention of the Marquis upon his arrival to some inquiry that had been made for him. The Marquis, however, did not arise at that hour to verify this impression, but in the morning when he awoke, he remembered it, and going into the drawing-room in his dressing-gown and slippers—it was before the arrival of his valet—he found the slip of paper where it had remained as though it had been slipped under the door.

"The Marquis was surprised when he came to examine this bit of paper. It contained some numbers written with a pencil, and the words in a strained, unformed hand: 'The combination of the safe of the Marquise de Chantelle.' Monsieur turned at once to the small safe which is built into the wall of the apartment after the American fashion. He tried the combination written on the slip of paper, found it correct, opened the safe and discovered that the necklace had disappeared."

The Prefect of Police hesitated in the narrative and addressed an inquiry.

"It is true, Monsieur," he said, "that you did not know the combination of this safe, that the combination was known only to your wife, the Marquise, and that more than once, for example at the Café Anglais on the fourteenth of December at midnight, when any creature from the underworld of Paris might have been present, you spoke of the danger of keeping this necklace in a small private safe in the apartment when it should be deposited with a banker? But to these objections the Marquise always returned the same answer—that she alone had the combination of the safe. This is true?"

"It is true," replied the Marquis. "But it was not discreet, as after-events have demonstrated. Perhaps by these discussions we gave information of the whereabouts of this necklace to this Apache Lequex."

The Prefect of Police made a vague gesture and continued to speak.

"The Marquis, upon discovery of the robbery, at once notified the *Service de la Sûreté*; old Forneau and an agent arrived immediately. Upon examination of the bit of paper, it proved to be a slip bearing the name in print of Moore-Poole & Company, a firm of American brokers in Paris. Old Forneau at once suggested that the robbery must have been committed by some one from the office of these brokers, probably an American,

since the slip of paper must have come from some one employed in the establishment. But here the Marquis de Chantelle, showing an intelligence superior to that of this officer of the *Sûreté*, pointed out that no one would come on such an adventure bringing with him a piece of paper, and especially an indicatory piece of paper, upon which to set down such a memorandum. It was far more likely that the piece of paper had been acquired somewhere in the apartment.

"He then suggested that an inquiry be made to discover whether some one from this American firm of Moore-Poole & Company had not at one time occupied an apartment in the building. Forneau acted upon this suggestion and ascertained that Monsieur the Marquis was correct. He discovered a quantity of these blank printed slips in the basement of the building, where, with other rubbish, they had been retained by the concierge to kindle fire in the furnace. Thus Monsieur the Marquis at one stroke removed any suspicion that might have been attached to this firm of brokers and confined the inquiry to some one having access to the building and knowledge of it, else he would not have been in the basement where this débris from the apartments of old tenants had accumulated.

"The query as to how the robber had obtained access to the Marquis' apartment on this night

now advanced itself. There is no key to these apartments except the one delivered to the tenant by the bank making the lease; and when the door is closed, it is locked from the outside—that is to say, the knob of the door does not turn on the outside; it turns only on the inside, so that it can always be opened from the inside, whether locked or not. It cannot be opened from the outside because the handle of the doorknob, as I have said, does not turn. How, then, would this robber enter the Marquis' apartment? Again the Marquis was able to give Forneau an explanation.

"On the evening of the robbery, it was his intention to remain in his apartment. He had dismissed his valet and the servants and was alone. Later he changed his mind and concluded to go out. Upon reflection he remembered that he did not entirely close the door; but it was a thing which did not at the moment impress him. It was his habit always, of course, to close the door, and he had closed it, but upon returning for a glove, he had left the door ajar. This he was afterward able to establish because of a trivial incident. He remembered the glitter of the electric light on the point of a gold frame at the corner of the drawing-room table. It caught his eye as he descended the steps. But it did not impress him with the fact that he had neglected entirely to close the door. It impressed him merely

as an incident which he afterwards remembered, and he continued to descend.

"It now occurred to Forneau that this robbery had been committed by some one of the hotel thieves of Paris, who were accustomed to enter any building which they were able to get into, and to search any apartment that they happened to find open. But the Marquis reminded Forneau that the person committing this robbery had brought with him a piece of paper from the basement, that mere thieves entering on the chance of finding some valuables would not have taken this precaution. Forneau recognized the wisdom of this suggestion, and he inquired of the Marquis upon what theory the investigation should proceed.

"The Marquis now pointed out that this robbery must have been committed by some one familiar with the building, some one who knew the habits of the tenants and was in a position to await a favorable opportunity; otherwise he could not have taken advantage of this one occasion on which the door to the Marquis' apartment happened not to be closed. This theory pleased Forneau, and he adopted every excellent suggestion which the Marquis was able to make. But he ventured to wonder from what source the thief had been able to obtain the combination to the safe, since it was known only to Madame the Mar-

quise. The Marquis was again able to indicate a valuable suggestion. Women, he pointed out, had always the same habits. They did not trust their memories for anything that required an accuracy of numbers. The Marquise would have somewhere this memorandum written down. He suggested that Forneau make a search of her writing-table.

"To their surprise they found the lock to the drawers of this table broken, and among some papers hastily turned over, at the back of one of these drawers, a small book with a red leather cover. On the last page, in pencil, was precisely the same memorandum which the Marquis had picked up on the slip of paper under the door—'the combination to the safe of the Marquise de Chantelle,' and following the four columns of four figures. It was now clear that the robbery had been committed as the Marquis had suggested—by some one in the building who had the leisure to watch and who was familiar with the habits of the tenants. It was not certain, of course, that this person would know that the necklace was in the safe, but he would be convinced that the safe held some objects of value.

"The problem which now presented itself was to discover what employee in the building could have written this memorandum. Forneau and the Marquis had before them the handwriting.

They were familiar with the history and associates of the valet, the concierge and the older employees, and were convinced that it was not one of these persons; but there were other employees in this apartment, and the problem was how to obtain specimens of their handwriting without incurring suspicion. In his perplexity Forneau asked the opinion of the Marquis de Chantelle.

The Marquis suggested the following clever device: The *Service de la Sûreté* should send an agent to the building pretending to be an official of the government concerned with certain mental tests required, in order to register citizens for the electorate. Among other tests, he should require them to write the name of the president of France and that of the premier at the close of the war. This would include the names of Millerand and Clemenceau, and by this means they could obtain the M of the word Marquise and the C of the word Chantelle, which had been written by the unknown thief upon the memorandum which contained the combination of the safe."

The Prefect of Police stopped. The attention of the Marquis de Chantelle seemed to have passed from the narrative to a contemplation of the opera.

Madame Zirtenzoff was at the point of her greatest scene. Her voice filled the immense house like a silver bell, like innumerable silver

bells—a quality of the human voice that no other diva had ever brought to Paris. Her youth, her alluring beauty, added to the enchantment.

Monsieur le Marquis de Chantelle was looking at her, one hand fingering his mustache, the other turning the monocle at the end of the silk cord. The Prefect of Police did not interrupt the absorption, but he continued to speak.

"And as it happened," he said, "it was the ingenuity of this device suggested by the Marquis de Chantelle that enabled Forneau to locate the one who had committed the robbery. He found an employee lately taken on by the concierge because he offered to assist in cleaning the building at a lower cost. The agent from the *Service de la Sûreté* came to this person in the course of his interview with the employees of the building.

" 'Monsieur,' he said, 'I am compelled to ask you to submit to some mental tests, but I will make them brief. Tell me the form of government under which we live and write down for me the name of the president of France and that of the premier who conducted the peace terms in the Great War, and I will give you no further annoyance.'

"The man replied that France was a republic and wrote the name of Alexandre Millerand. But when he came to write the C in Clemenceau, he hesitated. The agent seized him at once, snapped

a pair of handcuffs on him and confronted him with Forneau. He was shown the slip of paper which the Marquis had picked up in his apartment. He was told the details of the crime as he had carried it out; in his confusion, he confessed."

The Prefect of Police continued to speak slowly without a change of accent as if to himself.

"The Marquis was astonished when Forneau brought the confessed thief before him; like the usual amateur, he could not realize that his methods had succeeded; he could not believe that he had been so brilliantly correct in his deductions. He was amazed. He sought to test now every item upon which he had depended, to present its weakness, its doubt; and when he found the results inevitable, he washed his hands of the affair."

The Prefect introduced a comment without interrupting the monotony of his discourse.

"It was the tender, the considerate heart. The solution of a criminal mystery is a problem, but the criminal is a man to suffer!"

He went on:

"Monsieur le Marquis will remember the Apache's confession: he had obtained a position in the building and had watched the Marquis' apartment. As it happened, the night of the robbery was not the first time that the Marquis had left the door unclosed; a week before, he had left

it unclosed in the afternoon. It was then that this man had gone in,—taking with him a slip of paper from the basement—broken open the Marquise's desk and searched for the combination, which he finally found and wrote down. The search had required a very long time, and he had not time on this day to open the safe. He had taken the paper with him and waited until this night on which the Marquis had again gone out, leaving the door unlatched. Then he had opened the safe and removed the necklace. He thought that in putting the necklace into his pocket he must have pulled the slip of paper out, and by this means it had fallen to the floor where the Marquis had picked it up.

"The man made no defense and waived all legal procedure. He confessed and has been sentenced to a term of imprisonment. But he refused to say what he had done with the necklace."

Monsieur Jonquelle closed his narrative. For some moments he had been speaking in a casual voice as to a person who did not listen; and in fact, the Marquis de Chantelle had ceased to listen. He was entirely occupied with Madame Zirtenzoff, with her divine voice in the fairyland of the magnificent stage setting.

There was a moment of suspense.

She was about to dance before *Herod,* her body proportioned like a dryad's, supple in the nearly

naked costume of the East, commanding the exclusive attention of the whole of Paris packed in the opera house.

The Marquis de Chantelle, oblivious of Monsieur Jonquelle, was awaiting the presentation of his bouquet of orchids. They should arrive at this moment.

He watched to see what sign Madame Zirtenzoff would give him before she swayed into the divine dance that had entranced *Herod*.

Monsieur Jonquelle, watching the Marquis, took a box of cigarettes out of his pocket and slipped his thumb-nail around the stamp, but he did not open the box. He spoke suddenly to the Marquis de Chantelle; his voice was sharp, clear, and its tones arrested the man's attention.

"Monsieur le Marquis," he said, "Madame Zirtenzoff will not be pleased with her bouquet of orchids."

The Marquis turned suddenly on him; his eyes were now contracted with an intense expression.

"You know, Monsieur, that I have sent a bouquet of orchids to Madame Zirtenzoff?"

"Surely, Monsieur," replied the Prefect of Police. "I passed the boy departing with them when I entered. They were very lovely, superb, exquisite, the Mottled Butterfly! How aptly adapted is that flower to Monsieur le Marquis!"

The Marquis continued to regard him.

"And why, Monsieur, do you compare me with this variety of orchid?"

"If you will tell me, Monsieur le Marquis," replied the Prefect of Police, "why Jean Lequex refused to say where the necklace was that he had stolen, I will answer your question."

The hauteur in the Marquis' voice was now distinctly audible.

"Monsieur," he said, "it was you who promised to tell me that."

"And I shall tell you," replied Jonquelle. "Jean Lequex refused to say where the necklace was for the very good reason that he did not know where it was."

Monsieur Jonquelle looked the Marquis steadily in the face.

"The agents of the *Sûreté* neglected to mention to Monsieur an item or two of their discoveries: the writing on the slip of paper had been made with the left hand; and the concierge, as it happened, seeing the Marquis Chantelle go out leaving his door ajar, closed it.

"Ah, Monsieur, we have been engaged in a bit of comedy. Pardon us if we have deceived you. . . . It was I who conducted the investigation of your affair, disguised as Forneau; and it was the agent Forneau disguised as Jean Lequex who confessed to your robbery and took a mock sentence of imprisonment under an arrangement

with the court. . . . We did not find, then, the thief who opened the safe to your apartment."

The Marquis regarded the Prefect of Police with an amazed expression, his lips parted, his eyes wide.

"Then, Monsieur," he stammered, "you have discovered neither the thief nor the necklace."

"Ah, yes," replied Monsieur Jonquelle in the modulated voice of one who bids another adieu. "We have discovered both."

He took a mass of jewels out of his waistcoat pocket and handed them to the Marquis.

"I found these in the bouquet of orchids which you were sending to Madame Zirtenzoff. May I trouble you to present them to Madame la Marquise when she shall return from America tomorrow?"

XII.—*The Girl with the Ruby*

THE carriage was now hidden by the wall. And without thinking, without stopping to consider how strange my words must appear, I spoke the thing—the thing that had seemed a profound, inexplicable puzzle to me:

"Why do you marry this Norwegian woman?"

Tea had been served on the terrace of the villa during the formal call of the Ambassador and his daughter. And while they remained, and now that the carriage, in which they returned to the city, was a mere sound of wheels on the hard Cimiez road, I was occupied by this disturbing query.

The old Ambassador did not concern me. He was not a factor in the problem. But why my host, at his age, after his experiences of life, with his taste refined and exacting, should at last determine to marry this big, flax-haired, silent creature of the white North, was a problem that finally forced itself into words.

I sat beside one of the little iron tables on the terrace. The Prince Dimitri was walking slowly

along the whole length of the villa on the red tile that made a band of color against the white walls. The villa looked out over the sweep of the Mediterranean. Below, hidden by the vines and olive trees, was Nice. On the left, like a white ribbon, the Corniche road ascended into a gap of the mountain on its way to Mentone. And west of it, like a mirage—like an illusion—was the ruined, abandoned, fairy city of Châteauneuf.

I think he was the handsomest man in Europe. Middle age had merely served to refine the strength of his features. He was not poor. The upheaval of Russia had not wholly stripped him. Long before it came he had laid down a sort of partnership with Ravillon, the great jeweler on the Rue de Rivoli and the Place Messina. It was a trade that the war had not impaired. It left the prince in command of his villa, his house in Paris and an income.

He did not stop in his measured, reflective step at my inquiry. It was only when I added the four final words that he paused and turned about to regard me.

"Do you love her?" I said.

"Love?" He repeated the word slowly, softly, as though it were the potent element in some magic rune.

"Ah, no, my friend," he said, "I do not love her."

From every standpoint of material interest this marriage was desirable and excellent. The Norwegian woman was a royal princess and, like the young man in the Scriptures, she had great possessions; but these considerations did not seem sufficient.

"Then why did you arrange this marriage?" I said.

The man came back to where I sat, his hands linked behind him, his face reflective.

"Why does a man in peril," he said, "protect himself with a bolted door?"

I was profoundly astonished.

"Peril?" I repeated. "You in peril?"

"In the very deadliest peril, Monsieur Jonquelle," he said.

He went into the salon of the villa and presently returned with the most extraordinary photograph that I have ever seen. It was long and narrow, about four inches in length and perhaps an inch and a half in width. Three views of a woman's face appeared on this photograph; both of the side views and the full view.

The side views were upon the ends of the photograph, and the full face in the center. The photographic work was good—that is to say, it had been taken with an excellent lens by a skilled photographer; but it lacked every evidence of those

artificialities with which smart photographers add illusions to the human face.

The photographs were clear, hard and accurate, with no softening shadows. The board on which they were printed seemed ordinary and common, but the frame around this cheap board was a gold band studded with rubies. It was a wonderful frame, as beautiful as the best workmanship could make it.

But it was not these considerations which impressed me. It was the human face that appeared in these three contrasted positions. It was the picture of a young girl, her hair simply arranged as though she had not yet escaped from the discipline of a convent.

It was a face of exceptional beauty. One never could wish to change a line or a feature of it. Its bony structure was perfect. But there was something more than this mere structural excellence. There was the lure of an indescribable charm in the face—a charm that one could not separate in the expression from a profound innocence of life. One felt that the lure of this human creature must be extraordinary to appear thus impressive in the hard, garish outlines of this photograph.

The picture held my attention. I put it down on the table, only to take it up again. And the man watched me as one might watch in another

the effect of a drug which he had amazingly experienced in himself.

I continued to examine the photograph, and the one profound conviction that possessed me was that here, preserved on the cheap surface of a photograph board, was a woman with every quality of alluring, feminine charm; every quality that the big white, silent Northern woman amazingly lacked. And I wondered whence this strange, harsh photograph had come, and why the man before me had inclosed it in a frame of jewels and kept it as one preserves a treasure.

The prince sat down beyond me at the table. For a time he was silent; then, suddenly, he began to speak.

"One morning," he said, "in the early springtime, I was idling in Ravillon's shop on the Rue de Rivoli. We had been considering the importation of jewels. Some shipment from Amsterdam had come in and the shop was preparing for its usual summer trade with America. I had come out from the manager's room when I saw a girl pass the door. She looked in as she passed and, after she had gone a few steps beyond, hesitated, turned about and finally came timidly into the shop."

He paused and got a cigarette from a tray on the table, lighted it and held it a moment in his fingers.

"It was the girl you have just seen in the photograph. She was very plainly dressed. It was the sort of clothing that showed the evidences of gentility, I thought—and poverty. She wore a little piece of fur. It was old, and the seams of her dress had been cleaned and pressed until the fabric looked as though it would give way if an iron were again set on it.

"She asked to see a manufactured ruby of about two karats. The clerk was not impressed to consider her as a possible purchaser. He thought she was one of the class of poor shop girls in Paris who endeavor by this means to satisfy their curiosity about jewels. The women of Paris who buy manufactured jewels do not have the appearance of this girl."

Here the prince paused and touched the cigarette to his lips.

"But there was something about this woman," he said, "that profoundly disturbed me. I did not know what it was. I do not now know. But it was something independent of her appearance, although her appearance was remarkable enough. Her hair was the exquisite mahogany of a horse-chestnut, with that incomparable gloss which the shell of the nut bears when it first escapes from the hull. Her complexion was pale, almost as pale as plaster, and her eyes were blue—the blue of a Delft plate.

"I found myself wondering what race the girl was of. She seemed a sort of blend. I thought it was French or Italian and some other blood—some blood not of a tame, conventional race.

"The clerk laid a piece of black velvet on the table, brought some manufactured rubies and placed them before her. The girl sat down at the table and I went over and stood beside her. She selected one of the stones and asked the price, which was more than five hundred francs. She seemed very much disturbed at this. She inquired if the stone could not be purchased for five hundred francs. She put her hand into the bosom of her blouse, took out a little purse and emptied it on the table. It contained five hundred francs in gold pieces.

"For reply the clerk said that the stone could not be purchased for a less sum. But I interrupted him. I said she might have it at the price. It was then, it seemed, that she became aware of my presence for the first time. She got up and began to express her appreciation of my kindness. She seemed embarrassed, like a child who does not know precisely how to go about such a convention; and now that she spoke directly to me the charm of her personality was even more inconceivably impressive.

"Then she made what we considered an extraordinary request. She wished to know if we could

identify this stone. It was not clear why she wished to identify it. We got the impression that she intended to bring it in again later and she would like us to be certain to identify it. The clerk would have got rid of the matter in the easiest way he could, but I compelled him to consider it. It was a good deal of trouble to undertake to establish sufficient data for the identification of this manufactured stone. We had to make a very careful record of its exact measurements, the dimensions of its facets and so forth.

"I explained this to the girl; she listened attentively. She then asked for a duplicate of our record of identification, and I had this given to her. She went out of the shop with the manufactured ruby wrapped up in the duplicate of the record which we had made out for its identification."

Again the prince stopped, and flicked the ash from his cigarette. He remained for a moment looking out over Nice, at the vast sweep of the Mediterranean wrinkled by the touches of the mistral.

"I should have followed her," he said; "it was stupid to permit her to escape out of my knowledge, but under the charm of the girl I seemed incapable of any practical measure. I think at the moment she did not seem precisely real. She was like a fairy woman—something one had

longed for—appearing unexpectedly by virtue of an incantation.

"A moment later, when I went to the door of the shop to look, she was nowhere to be seen. She had vanished, but the spell with which I was enveloped did not vanish. It remained. And I came every day to the shop in the Rue de Rivoli under the hope that she would return.

"I had a strong basis for the hope, and I clung to it as a drowning man would cling to a life line. The stone would come back for identification some time, and by that clew I would find her again. I ought to have gone to Amsterdam on the affairs of the house, and I ought to have returned to my estates in Russia, but I would not have missed a day from the shop in the Rue de Rivoli for the redemption of the world."

He paused. The sun going down behind the black ridge of the mountains gilded the fairy city of Châteauneuf as though it were powdered over with gold dust. The wrinkles on the Mediterranean were breaking into little ridges whitened on their summits. The vague touches of the mistral seemed to approach.

"It is of no use to undertake to explain the thing," he said. "There is no explanation of it. Something like the odor of a blossom had reached deliciously to every fiber in my body. I was under the dominance of a sorcery that no sort of com-

mon sense could exorcise. I was written to in vain from Amsterdam and from Russia. I remained in the shop in the Rue de Rivoli.

"And I was rewarded for that vigilance.

"One evening, perhaps a month later, as we were closing the shop the girl suddenly entered. She welcomed me with a smile. And it seemed that all at once, by virtue of that smile, the blackness of the pit in which I had miserably dwelt was flooded with sunlight. She put on the table the ruby and the crumpled paper which bore our duplicate of identification. And she asked us to look again at the stone.

"I did not look at the ruby.

"The girl alone occupied my attention exclusively. I wished to impress forever on my memory every detail of her. The sheen of her hair, the deep vivid blue of her eyes, and her incomparable mouth, innocent like a flower.

"It was some time then before I realized that the clerk was calling my attention to the jewel. He seemed to be very much astonished. What he was saying was:

" 'But this is not a manufactured ruby; it is a real ruby.'

"The girl sprang up at the word.

" 'Oh,' she said, 'is it true? Is it real?'

"The clerk asked me to examine the stone, and I did examine it. Every expert in the shop exam-

ined it. It corresponded precisely to every item of our data for the identification of the manufactured ruby. We compared the measurements with the most delicate instruments in our possession. They were all precisely correct. It was in every detail the manufactured stone which we had sold to her for five hundred francs. But the amazing, astonishing, inexplicable thing was that the stone was no longer a manufactured ruby, it was a genuine ruby. We applied every test of which dealers in jewels have any knowledge. There was no doubt about it. The stone was real. By some means a manufactured ruby worth five hundred francs had changed into a genuine ruby worth twenty thousand francs.

"The girl seemed transported with delight when we told her the result of the test. But she made no explanation. She went at once out of the shop."

The cigarette had burned to his finger tips and the prince tossed it over the edge of the terrace into the vines.

"But this time," he said, "I did not propose that the girl should escape me; I followed her. She hurried down the Rue de Rivoli and turned into the Place de la Concorde. I continued to follow her. I don't think I was very discreet about it. I was too anxious to be careful. Presently she seemed to be disturbed. She had seen

me crossing the street and knew that I followed her. She hesitated, uncertain what to do, then she went on swiftly for perhaps a dozen paces. She stopped, and I thought she intended to turn and come back, but she went across the Rue de Rivoli through the gate into the garden of the Tuileries.

"I followed through the gate.

"She walked rapidly under the horse-chestnuts. I had lost all discretion about the matter now, and I went on hurriedly, fearful that I should lose sight of her for an instant. There is a bench, behind some shrubs, looking out toward the Seine. She went around the shrubs and sat down on the bench. I came up, parted the branches and looked through to see what had become of her. She was sitting huddled on the bench, her head on her arm, crying. I went around and sat down beside her. I did not say anything—I did not know what to say; there seemed nothing to say.

"She continued to cry softly for a good while, her face on her arm. And the undulation of her shoulders, and the tremor of her hand that lost itself under the wealth of hair, affected me beyond any possibility of speech. I suppose I should have sat there until morning—until the world wore out turning on its axis—without a word, without a motion, enveloped with the sorcery of something in this woman.

"I don't know how to describe it; there doesn't seem to be any word in any language to describe it. It was as though every cell, every living, organic cell that made up the unit of my body, starved; had a desperate, primeval, animal sensation of hunger. And it was the hunger of panic; it was the hunger of long deprivation; a hunger unfed from the beginning of the world."

The man stopped and got another cigarette.

"You will say that I was mad, of course. I was not mad. I was as sane and intelligent as I am now, as I shall be when I marry this Norwegian woman. The thing had nothing to do with any sort of madness. It was simply something that had awakened; something that by the gracious beneficence of God is usually kept sleeping in us. I don't see how it could be explained to anybody. If a man were born blind, how could one explain color to him? If he were deaf from his mother, how could one explain music to him? It may be fortunate; it may be out of an inscrutable wisdom that the thing is dormant in most of us. I don't know what would happen to the world if that thing awoke in everybody as it awoke in me on that afternoon in the garden of the Tuileries.

"Of course, it did not awake there; it awoke the first time the girl came into the shop, and it was waiting when she returned. But it clamored

now; it clamored like hungry cheetahs before the grating of a pit. And yet with all that hell going on inside I did not move and I did not say anything. Presently the girl sat up. She wiped the tears out of her eyes. I remember it perfectly. She had a little handkerchief wadded up in her fingers and she dabbed her eyes with it.

" 'Oh, Monsieur,' she said, 'I don't know what to do. You will follow me—you will find out everything—and you will take it for the use of your big shop.'

"She repeated it and the tears began again. I don't know what I said; I must have said a good deal, and I suppose that it must have seemed impressive. I think it would have seemed convincing, for I was desperately in earnest. No one could have been in more deadly earnest about anything. It seemed to me that the most important thing in the world, the most important thing that would ever be in the world, was to convince this girl that she could trust me.

"I did not know what it was she would need to trust me about—I had no idea what thing she feared would be taken away or what use the house, to which my name was attached, would make of anything she knew or had control of. But I labored to convince her that anything in which she was in any way interested was safe; would be made safe.

"We must have appeared very curious to any one walking through the garden of the Tuileries —a girl crying on a bench and a man in this earnest appeal."

Here the prince paused and got another match for his cigarette.

"And yet," he said, "when one stops to think about it, that would be the one sort of scene in Paris having no element of strangeness. It would be simply a scene out of the oldest tragedy of the world, to be met with anywhere. There is no bench in the whole garden of the Tuileries upon which it has not been enacted."

He paused.

"I don't remember precisely how the thing ended, but it was all somehow concerned with what seemed to be a surrender to me—a capitulation. Women do things like that. We shall never understand the mental process by which they arrive at a conclusion to do them. Perhaps there is no mental process. I suppose the thing is a sort of feeling, or it is a sort of relaxation, or it is a sort of abandonment. I don't know what to call it. She would come to-morrow afternoon to the shop and she would put everything into my hands; she would trust me—that is what it all summed up to."

Night was beginning to arrive—a sort of blue deepening, as though the Italian sky descended

over the Riviera and hardened into sapphire. I got the picture and began to look at it again. I had not been mistaken. Something of the extraordinary charm which the man before me felt himself unable to describe was unquestionably present even in this strained photograph.

The prince went on. He was not looking at me. He was looking at the Mediterranean rising to meet the descending Italian sky:

"I was in the manager's office of the jeweler's shop, on the Rue de Rivoli, the following afternoon. I was there from midday until the moment she came in. It was very late when she arrived. The afternoon was nearly gone. The clerks were putting up the iron shutters, but they were not permitted to close the door. I would have kept the door open all the night and all of every other night; it should have stood open forever, like the doors to the churches of God, until she came in."

For a few moments he was silent. Then he continued, as though he had omitted a great chapter of description—of the physical description of a woman and the analysis of a consuming passion—a chapter that I would not understand, a chapter that perhaps nobody would understand:

"She had a package under her arm wrapped up in an old newspaper. It was heavy and she carried it very gently. She put it down on the manager's table and then she removed the news-

paper and disclosed a copper box. When the lid was lifted the box was seen to have two compartments; one of these was of a whitish metal and the other some sort of composition. There was a glass plate between the two compartments and above it what seemed to be a reflector. She moved something in the box and a ray, ruby colored, descended on the plate.

"She explained that her father was an Italian chemist. All his life he had been engaged in the study of the synthetic chemistry of jewels. He held that the manufactured ruby of commerce differed from the true ruby only in its atomic structure. And he believed that this atomic structure could be made to rearrange itself under the influence of the true ruby and a kinetic agent.

"The device in the copper box was the result of this theory. If true rubies were heaped around a manufactured stone and subjected to the ray, the influence of the atoms in the true stones, under the light energy, would cause the atoms in the manufactured stone to arrange themselves in a similar order.

"This was the explanation of the change that had taken place in the manufactured ruby. Her father was dead. He had left her this invention. She had wished to test it and she had taken the five hundred francs which she had received from the sale of his books and purchased the ruby. She

had placed it on the glass plate under this device, surrounded it with the little fragments of genuine rubies which her father had been able to gather up, and the change which we had observed had taken place.

"There had been a rearrangement of the molecular structure of the stone. She explained that her father had said that the change in the manufactured stone would be quicker if the true rubies around it were larger, but that he had had no money with which to buy large stones and she could only work slowly with the fragments which he had got. She now put the invention into my hands. It was a part of this surrender—this abandonment.

"I called in the manager and the clerks. It seemed incredible to us. But all sorts of incredible inventions had come out of Italy. The discoveries of Marconi had put every man where he could no longer say that anything was impossible; and, besides, we had the concrete evidence in the manufactured ruby which had been transformed. We put the device into the safe with a manufactured ruby on the glass plate, surrounded with a heap of the best oriental stones in our possession."

He paused. In the thick light his body had a distorted outline. For a long time there was no sound. Then he went on:

"I think, Monsieur Jonquelle," he said, "that

we are never quite prepared for the utter unreserved surrender of a woman to us, even at the end of our most elaborate arguments. The girl's abandonment to my honor had not ended.

"'And now, Monsieur,' she said, 'what are you going to do with me?'"

He paused again.

"I took her to the house of my aunt, the Countess Casseni, on the Bois de Boulogne."

He hesitated and his voice thickened.

"The third patriarch said that the days of his life had been few and evil; many and evil mine seem! But two moments of them outbalance the weight of the years: The moment in the carriage when she said 'I love you!' and the moment when my aunt, the Countess Casseni, took me, softly, into the bedchamber, with the balcony opening on to the Bois de Boulogne, and showed me the girl asleep in the great canopied bed—asleep like a worn-out child, her pale face gleaming like a flower."

Night had descended. It was suddenly dark. The man beyond me was only a voice speaking in the darkness:

"I never saw her again!"

"Never saw her again!" I cried. "Then where did you get this picture?"

"I got it from the rogues' gallery, of the *Service de la Sûreté,*" he said. "She belonged to the

White Wolves, the most desperate association of criminals in Europe."

"But the invention?" I cried. "Was it a hoax?"

He answered slowly in the darkness:

"It was by no means a hoax, Monsieur Jonquelle. It would not change a manufactured stone into a ruby—the genuine stone the girl brought in had been cut in Amsterdam to match the manufactured ruby which she had purchased. But the invention was effective for its purpose, all the same. At three o'clock on that night it blew open the vault of our shop in the Rue de Rivoli; we lost five hundred thousand francs in jewels."

Then suddenly his voice strengthened:

"But all this would not matter. Nothing would matter. If I should ever find her, and I were free, I would follow her through the slime of the world!"

"And so," I said, "you are arranging this marriage as protection against the girl."

His voice came softly, like a whisper. "Yes," he said; "that is it—to bolt the door!"

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